

Desolate Era

(莽荒纪)

Book 44

The Dusk War

I Eat Tomatoes

(我吃西红柿)

Story Description:

Fate had never been kind to Ji Ning. Wracked by illnesses and infirm his entire life on Earth, Ning knew early on that he would die as a teenager. What he didn't know was that there really was such a thing as life after death, and that the multiverse was a far larger place than he thought. A lucky twist of fate (one of the few in Ning's life) meant that Ning was reborn into a world of Immortals and monsters, of Ki Refiners and powerful Fiendgods, a world where Dynasties lasted for millions of years. A world which is both greater...and yet also smaller...than he ever could imagine. He would have the opportunity to join them, and in this life, Ning swore to himself, he would never let himself be weak again! The Era he was born into was a Desolate one, but Ning would make it his era.

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

Chapter 1: Grand Army, Mobilize!

A peaceful, beautiful, and vast world where Hegemons and Emperors resided.

“Come, try this new dish I came up with.” Three Hegemons and five weaker Emperors were seated next to each other. A curly red-haired man walked out from a nearby hall, a smile on his face as he called out to them. He then waved his hand, causing the platters before him to fly towards his eight friends. Each platter was filled with red strips of meat covered by some sort of sauce.

“We absolutely must try brother Bluefive’s delicacies.”

“Whoah, not bad. It’s quite crispy. The flavor goes all the way down to my toes! I feel absolutely wonderful. Unnngh... in fact, I almost feel a bit tipsy...”

“It’s delicious, absolutely delicious.”

“Bluefive, bring out some more. We’re almost finished!”

The Hegemons all praised the food and asked for more.

“Calm down! This is something I just finished concocting. If you like it, I’ll make some more in a bit,” the red-haired man chortled. He felt quite delighted and proud that his friends loved his food.

Right at this moment...

“All Sithe warriors, prepare to receive the orders of almighty Iyerre!” a voice suddenly thundered. The words echoed throughout the world, reverberating throughout every inch of it.

All nine of the Hegemons and Emperors who had been eating and chatting, including Bluefive, instantly turned pale.

Rumble... a vast, blurry pillar of light suddenly appeared at the highest point in the very center of this world. A humanoid figure slowly began to take form within the pillar of light. It was the balding, barefoot, gray-robed Iyerre. The tall and muscular Iyerre stared downwards upon everyone in

the world. This was just a projection, but it was enough to cause all the Hegemons and Emperors to quiver with fear.

All the Hegemons and Emperors, be it the ones who were training in their estates or the ones who were partying with friends, all came out to bow with incomparable reverence, demonstrating their respect and submission towards this man.

“Warriors of the Sithe.” Iyerre stared downwards at them, a smile on his face: “You have all come from our homeland to this foreign Chaosverse... and for what?”

“To fight! To fight a war that will change all of our destinies, both yours and mine! We have to win this war! If we win, all of you will gain absolute freedom for yourselves... and I, Iyerre, shall forever remember you and treat you kindly,” Iyerre said. “Our last war was nothing more than a trial run. This one, however, shall be the final war! There is no way out for any of us. Once we lose this battle, we’ll have no chance of winning in the future.”

All the Hegemons and Emperors felt their hearts clench. No way out? They had a way out last time; when they saw that things were turning against them, they retreated to this place.

“An Eternal Omega Dao has arisen within this Chaosverse! If we don’t attack now, the natives of this Chaosverse shall quickly become so powerful that we’ll have no chance of defeating them at all.

“Thus... this time, we have to win no matter the cost! Those who perform well shall all be rewarded. Even if you die in battle, I’ll reverse spacetime to bring you back. Those cowards who elect to flee, however... even if they manage to survive, I’ll put them all to death!

“Now, everyone shall mobilize! Follow the plan we prepared long ago and advance to the various realmverses of the native cultivators!”

The vast airborne image of Iyerre slowly began to dissipate. A sense of pressure quickly began to press down upon all the Hegemons and Emperors within this great world.

“So the final war is finally beginning.” Hegemon Bluefive, standing amongst his eight friends, murmured softly: “I was lucky enough to survive the last war, then were given so many years of blissful peace in this world. This was more than we had any right to expect!”

“Some of us came later on, after the first war had already come to an end. But... Bluefive, we already know everything there is to know about these cultivators. We’re going to win this war.”

“Right. We’ll definitely win.”

“There’s no way out. Only victory will grant us release.”

“Fight.”

“Fight.”

“Fight!” The Hegemons and Emperors exchanged glances with each other. They could sense the firm resolve and combative auras emanating from their peers. Their destinies had been set down in stone long ago; they had to obey Iyerre’s orders, and Iyerre had ordered them to this Chaosverse. Here, they had quietly waited for the war to begin. Their only hope lay in victory.

They had all come here for the sake of gaining victory in the final war.

“Follow the plan which was set down long ago. Board the warships and prepare to mobilize!” a loud voice boomed out, echoing throughout the world.

“Prepare to mobilize!”

“Board the warships!”

“Move faster!” Voices rang out from throughout the world.

“Let’s get ready to go.” Bluefive and his eight friends transformed into streaks of light that shot off into the distance.

In just the time needed to boil a kettle of tea, a series of enormous warships began to soar into the skies. Each warship held a total of roughly twenty Hegemons and many more Emperors, as well as many golems and mighty treasures.

“Activate!”

Rumble... space began to tremble as the power which had lain dormant for so many years in this mysterious dimension was finally activated. It was like an enormous flower had begun to bloom.

This particular dimension had been hidden within a part of the Great Dark of the local Chaosverse. It had been buried here for countless years, and the cultivators had never discovered its existence.

A veritable throng of warships simultaneously flew out in every direction.

“Good luck.”

“Take care, elder brother Svastika.”

“Best of luck.” Many friends bade each other farewell.

“Let’s go!”

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Countless dimensional tunnels appeared around them. Each warship flew into a dimensional tunnel, warping away at high speed. They were able to warp through spacetime much more quickly than realmships could; each of them was comparable to the Blacksun in this regard! These ancient warships had been created for the express purpose of battle and transportation, and they were incredible in both aspects.

On this day, a total of eighteen different hidden dimensions located in different regions simultaneously released countless warships unto an unsuspecting Chaosverse. The Sithe had spent countless aeons filling these hidden dimensions with many mighty experts! Many of them had been sent over from the Sithe Chaosverse after they had lost the first war.

The native cultivators had produced many new experts over the aeons, but the Sithe Chaosverse had produced even more. Many of them had been sent over to this Chaosverse, where they had hidden themselves and awaited Iyerre’s orders. Now that the orders had arrived, they all mobilized and began to spread throughout the Chaosverse.

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The Flamedragon Realmverse. The Three Realms.

Ji Ning was in secluded meditation on Brightheart Island. He was under the effects of 100x temporal acceleration and was diligently focusing on the mysteries behind the sphere of annihilation at all times. He had the feeling that if he used it as a guidepost to create a matching Sword Dao, that Sword Dao would possess absolutely incredible power.

“Eh?” Ning suddenly opened his eyes, breaking his meditations. This was the exact moment those eighteen hidden dimensions had suddenly revealed themselves, blooming into existence and releasing an enormous number of warships which had quickly spread themselves throughout the Chaosverse.

In that instant, Ning could sense a deep, forboding aura of danger come crashing down upon him. It was as though dark stormclouds had suddenly blotted out the sun above him. This invisible pressure made it impossible for Ning to remain calm and collected! Not even the appearance of the Annihilation Hive had generated a sense of danger as great as the one Ning felt right now. The premonition of danger was so great that Ning could feel his heart shuddering.

“What’s going on? What the hell just happened?” Ning had an inkling, but he wasn’t certain of it. He didn’t dare believe it.

Last time, Ning could distinctly sense where the sense of danger was originating from. This time was different! The danger was completely omnipresent, as though every single part of the Chaosverse was in grave danger. There was no way to find the ‘source’ of it, and as a result Ning didn’t know what to do.

“Mogg. Titanos. What’s going on? Do you know what just happened?” Ning immediately sent a message through the Autarch message-talisman.

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Within the ancient temple that levitated in the skies above that island in the outer perimeter of the Sithelands. Autarch Mogg and the others were

all gathered here.

“What the hell? What the hell just happened? I-I...” Autarch Ekong had a frantic, fearful look on his face. This sense of danger caused him to feel extremely uneasy. It was as though the entire Chaosverse had just been plunged into darkness.

However, Autarch Mogg, Autarch Skyfeeder, Autarch Stonerule, and Autarch Titanos were all quite calm. They simply exchanged a glance.

“It has finally begun,” Autarch Titanos said softly.

“This nightmarish feeling of doom... I never wanted to feel it again, but here it is.” Autarch Skyfeeder shook her head. She would never be able to forget what a calamitous war the Dawn War had been. Far, far too many of their Hegemons and Emperors had died in that war.

“Our greatest fear has been realized.” Autarch Mogg shook his head.
“Our seals really were useless against them.”

Autarch Mogg could sense that Ning had just sent them a message. He took out his message-talisman, then sent a single message out:

“Darknorth, the war has begun!”

Chapter 2: Ji Nings First Massacre

Boom! The door to a private room swung open, followed by the white-robed Ji Ning striding out.

“Father.”

“Young master.” Brightmoon and Autumn Leaf were the nearest, and they immediately came over to greet him.

Ning looked at his daughter and his ‘elder sister’, then turned to gaze at the world around him. His gaze saw past the walls of reality, allowing him to see all of the chaosworlds of the Three Realms at a glance.

“I hope that the flames of war will not scorch the Three Realms,” Ning murmured softly to himself.

“Nuwa,” Ning sent mentally. Whoosh! A figure warped through space and immediately appeared before him. It was Mother Nuwa.

“Darknorth, why have you summoned me?” Nuwa smiled.

“The war against the Sithe has already begun,” Ning said. Nuwa and Brightmoon both turned pale. Autumn Leaf, however, simply had a puzzled look on her face. She was at a very low level of power, and so there were many secrets which she simply didn’t need to know. Brightmoon was both a Daolord of the Fourth Step and Ning’s daughter. She was more or less considered a member of the Three Realms’ highest echelon, and so she was naturally informed of many secrets as well.

“Father, the war has begun?” Brightmoon looked very anxious. “Then...”

“The war has begun. The Sithe are targeting the various Hegemons of our realmverses,” Ning said. “As for the countless mortals, World-level cultivators, and Daolords? They don’t really care. They won’t even waste too much energy on hunting down the weaker Emperors. It’ll be safer for you to stay in the Three Realms.”

As one of the paramount leaders of the cultivators, Ning naturally had to lead the charge! He would go wherever there was the most danger. The

Sithe had failed during their last attempt. Given that they dared to come again, they had most assuredly made ample preparations and adjustments based on their past experiences. The Annihilation Hive alone proved to Ning that the Sithe were to be dreaded! Most likely, even their Autarchs would be at risk of dying.

This meant it would be very dangerous for his friends and family members in the Three Realms to accompany him. It was actually far safer for them to remain behind in the Three Realms instead.

"Take good care of the Three Realms." Ning looked at Brightmoon then instructed solemnly, "Do everything you can to keep it safe."

"Yes, Father," Brightmoon said hurriedly.

Ning nodded slowly. He had long ago fashioned many formations and other treasures which would ensure that the Three Realms was almost completely impregnable! Even Sithe Exalts would have a difficult time breaking into it.

"Nuwa, I'll send you to the front lines," Ning said. Mother Nuwa nodded. As a Hegemon, she had to take part in this war!

Before leaving, Ning gave a lingering final glance to the world behind him. This was the world he had loved and had roamed for so many years. He had spent many years here in secluded meditation, teaching his disciples, and even gardening...

"Let's go." Ning said nothing else, immediately leading Mother Nuwa in warping away from the Three Realms.

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A vast, empty region outside the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance. This place had long ago been designated as a major battlefield, much like the Terror Starsea of the past.

"Here we are." Ning only needed to warp through spacetime three times before arriving at the battlefield, Nuwa in tow. The dimensional ripples generated by their arrival meant that the two of them were almost instantly discovered, and the disheveled-looking 'Realmslord Windgrace'

personally came to greet them.

"Emperor Darknorth," Realmslord Windgrace said with incredible respect.

"Have you finished preparing the battlefield?" Ning asked.

"We finished long ago. The many treasures which Autarch Titanos gave us made the process quite quick." Realmslord Windgrace was filled with confidence. "The battlefield before us is a first-class battlefield. The Hegemons and Emperors of the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance and many other nearby realmverses have all been gathered here. We have over 105 Hegemons alone, and many of them brought their avatars. If the Sithe dare come, we'll wipe out as many as they send."

Realmslord Windgrace was very confident because back during the Dawn War, the cultivators didn't have nearly as many powerful weapons as they did right now. They had relied purely on formations, and as a result they had suffered incredibly heavy casualties.

They had won the Dawn War, and they had acquired many Sithe weapons as a result! Autarch Titanos had also spent countless aeons forging many similar weapons which were even more suitable for cultivators to use. Autarch Titanos normally kept them in reserve, because he didn't want to let these super weapons throw the entire Chaosverse into a state of turmoil! However, ever since Ning and the others had begun to suspect that the seal over the Sithe heartlands had failed, they had immediately begun to make the necessary arrangements. They had started to prepare battlefronts in secret, with the Hegemons and Emperors all gathered there.

Nuwa was responsible for helping Ning protect the Three Realms. As a result, she was a bit of an outlier and was permitted to remain in the Three Realms. When the battle began, Ning sent her over in person.

Hegemon Brightshore and the others had long ago travelled to this battlefield. Most of them had only left behind weak, newly-created avatars behind in their respective realmverses. Once the war actually began, they would immediately discard those avatars and focus on maintaining and

strengthening a single mighty avatar.

"Very good." Ning smiled. "This is going to be a long-lasting war. We need to conserve as much of our power as possible, even as we try to slay as many enemies as is possible. The Sithe have been lying in wait for many, many years. Now that they have arisen anew, you absolutely must not be complacent or underestimate them."

"Understood," Realmslord Windgrace responded.

"I'm off then." Ning gave Nuwa a final glance, then turned and disappeared without a trace.

Mother Nuwa and Realmslord Windgrace both watched as Ning disappeared. They knew that as an Autarch-class combatant, Ning was responsible for many battlefronts throughout the entire Chaosverse.

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Swoosh! Ning appeared at the margins of a different realmverse. His godsense was so great that it was able to cover an area a hundred times vaster than a single realmverse. As a result, he was able to investigate everything within this realmverse with ease.

"There are no Sithe here." Ning immediately warped away once more.

The war had already begun. The six Autarchs and Ning had long ago prepared their strategy for fighting this war! Countless Hegemons and Emperors had long ago been gathered in various prepared battlefronts which were spread throughout the Chaosverse! Every single battlefield varied in size, based on how many Hegemons and Emperors resided in the surrounding area. The region around the Flamedragon Realmverse didn't actually have all that many Hegemons and thus probably wouldn't be a high-priority target, but since it was his homeland Ning was going to do a wide-ranging inspection of it before leaving. As a result, there was no need for any other battlefronts to be prepared anywhere near the Flamedragon Realmverse!

The reason why the battlefield Mother Nuwa and Realmslord Windgrace were in was actually located extremely far away. Ning had to

warp through spacetime three times before he could reach it! The sheer number of experts they had gathered there was why it was classified as a first-class battlefield.

“Hm.” The white-robed Ning appeared out of nowhere above a grayish planet. His godsense stretched out once more as he scanned for any traces of the Sithe.

“Nothing.” Ning disappeared once more.

Starting from the Flamedragon Realmverse, Ning began an inspection of all the nearby realmverses. If he found any hint of the Sithe at all, he would immediately be able to trace them and then slay them!

The six Autarchs and Ning, along with their respective avatars, were all responsible for watching over different regions. They began to ‘sweep’ through their assigned locations. However, each ‘zone’ was so incredibly vast that it would take time. It must be remembered that it would usually take them months traveling in a straight line at top speed to pass through these zones! This was a testament to how truly vast the Chaosverse was.

Right now, they had to carefully inspect every single part of their zones in detail. The only reason they dared to do this was because they were so much faster than everyone else. They would get rid of the Sithe they encountered as soon as possible, so as to relieve the pressure on the Hegemons and Emperors on their side.

“Darknorth, six of our battlefronts have discovered Sithe warships and moved to engage them,” Autarch Titanos sent through the message-talisman. “The Sithe have already sent out their grand army. More and more Sithe warships will begin to launch attacks throughout our Chaosverse. We need to destroy as many of them as possible, since we have fewer Hegemons, Emperors, and treasures than the Sithe.”

“Alright.” Ning nodded. He also knew that the Sithe were better at producing Hegemons and Emperors. Given how much time had passed, they had probably also sent many new Hegemons from their homeland. Without a doubt, the Sithe had a significant advantage in cultivators and treasures. It was up to the six Autarchs and Ning to make up for that

advantage!

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Ning continued to sweep through one realmverse after another. Thankfully, he was able to scan at extremely great distances. His techniques were also so incredible that he could detect even remnant auras left behind by already-departed warships. Thus... after the time needed to boil a kettle of tea, Ning found what he was looking for.

"An aura?" Ning's godsense quickly discovered a faint rippling aura from somewhere far away in the Great Dark. This was an aura which the Chaosverse itself was pushing back against.

"Sithe!" Ning immediately recognized the aura and began to charge towards it.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Just a few short warps later, Ning was able to see an enormous warship cruising through space in front of him. This warship was so large, it was on par with the Tigerhill warship Ning had discovered all those years ago.

The person responsible for inspecting spacetime instantly discovered Ning warping through spacetime towards them. They detected Ning's entire body blazing with such dazzling, luminescent power that the Sithe couldn't even look at him directly.

"That's one of the native Autarchs!" The Sithe Hegemons and Emperors within the warship instantly felt despair. Encountering one of the native Autarchs midflight... this was their worst nightmare.

"Flee! Flee, everyone! Let as many escape as is possible!" None of the Sithe believed they could possibly resist one of the Autarchs.

Chapter 3: Miserable

The warship was in control of spacetime in the surrounding area, making it impossible to warp through spacetime once you entered the range of a hundred billion kilometers around it.

“Eh? The warship actually blocks out heartforce?” Ji Ning had been planning on using his ‘Heartforce Eradicator’ technique to kill them, only to find that it wouldn’t go through the hull of the ship.

“Quick, let’s flee!”

“Run away!”

“Give him a blast first!”

Boom! A terrifyingly large dimensional blade shot out through space, smashing at Ning with Autarch-level power.

Ning immediately transformed into a storm of wind and lightning, instantly traversing the distance of a hundred million kilometers in a ghostly, unpredictable manner. The giant dimensional blade which had shot out of the warship couldn’t even come close to touching him, and just a heartbeat later Ning had reached the warship itself.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Hegemons and Emperors had begun to appear outside the vast warship. They were beginning to scatter and flee in every single direction. Every single person who survived would represent a ‘win’ for them.

“Die.” Ning swept them with his cold gaze, and an invisible surge of power instantly swept across them. This powerful heartforce assault instantly wiped them out.

“In I go.” Ning touched the outer hull of the warship, instantly blinking inside.

“Ahhh! Not good! The Autarch has come inside!”

“Doomed. We’re doomed.” The Hegemons and Emperors inside the warship all discarded any notions of escaping, because it was now clear

that certain death awaited them outside as well.

"Revered Autarch, are you willing to spare these weak children?"

"Spare us! We were forced to do this."

"Cultivator Autarch, you can kill us, but I would like to ask you to spare our children. They belong to your Chaosverse and are part of it."

Some of the Hegemons begged for mercy, while some accepted death but asked for mercy for their descendants.

As soon as Ning had entered, he had immediately been able to scan every inch of the warship with ease via heartforce! With but a thought, he would wipe out all of the Sithe present. This was what made heartforce so deadly! If Autarch Bolin or Autarch Ekong had arrived, they would've had to waste time breaking through the various defenses. Heartforce cultivators, in contrast, were able to wipe out large numbers of opponents from afar.

"Get in here." Ning flickered past over a hundred Hegemons and Emperors who had already given up. With a wave of his hand, he drew them into his estate-world.

With another flicker, Ning arrived at the centermost region of this entire warship. A large number of Sithe descendants lived here. Once the war had begun, the various hidden dimensions were exposed and no longer safe. Over the course of countless aeons, those hidden dimensions had produced many Sithe descendants. They naturally had to accompany the warships in leaving.

"These Sithe descendants..." Ning shook his head slowly, then waved his hand and drew in all the thronging masses of Sithe descendants as well.

"The rest can die." There were a number who were still struggling to flee. They were scattered throughout the warship, and Ning had no time to waste on capturing them one-by-one. He simply cast his 'Heartforce Eradicator'... and with a thought, all of them were slain!

In truth, Ning knew that many of the Sithe warriors had been forced into this war. However, this was a clash of civilizations that would result in the

destruction of one! Ning's time was extremely precious. He was willing to capture and imprison a few Sithe instead of killing them if it didn't take up too much time, but if it did? He'd rather just wipe them out.

"In you go." After exiting the warship, Ning collected both the warship as well as several realmships floating around next to it.

Generally speaking, the warships which Ning or Autarch Stonerule were responsible for attacking would be captured in perfect condition. Autarch Ekong and the others mostly used highly destructive attacks, resulting in the warships being damaged or destroyed. As for this particular warship Ning had captured, it was a transport warship that had been filled with many artifacts and treasures that hadn't even been used yet.

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"Twenty-six different battlefronts are under attack. They are located..."

New information came from Ning's Autarch message-talisman. As one of the supreme leaders of the cultivators, Ning naturally knew where all their forces throughout the Chaosverse were located. Thus, he immediately knew which ones were under attack.

"I'm very close to the Springsea battlefield. I'll head there immediately," Autarch Stonerule sent to the other six. The Autarchs were all exchanging information with each other, ensuring that they were on top of the situation overall.

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Time flowed on. More and more battlefronts became embroiled in war. Given how far the various battlefronts were from each other, the Autarchs and Ning were all separately responsible for different theaters and could only do their best to cause as much damage as possible.

"That's one of the native Autarchs!"

A dazzling figure of golden light suddenly appeared. The Sithe Hegemons and Emperors who were assaulting the battlefield were all stunned. They knew that encountering a native Autarch represented doom.

“Die.” Ning swept his gaze across the Sithe. In order to keep his true identity hidden, during battle he intentionally kept his aura flared to the max, making it impossible for the Sithe to know who he was.

An awesome wave of heartforce immediately spread out, covering an area comparable to more than half a realmverse. With but a thought, Ning eradicated over 99% of the Sithe who were spread out throughout the battlefield, even the ones who were located within forts and castles! Only the few who were lucky enough to be inside castles and warships which blocked out heartforce were able to survive, but Ning simply spent a few more seconds mopping them up.

“The Sithe in the Rearlake battlefield have all been exterminated.” Ning sent word to the other six Autarchs, then hurried to his next destination.

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The Autarchs and Ning seized every moment, continuing hastening across the Chaosverse continuously scanning for threats. Every so often, they would make a stop at a nearby battlefield that had already been embroiled in war! As for the more distant ones, they wouldn’t be in a rush to go to them.

The war began to expand in both scale and ferocity. By now, there were multiple battles going on throughout the Chaosverse at every moment.

Things weren’t so bad for Ning and Autarch Stonerule, as they were able to use their heartforce powers to instantly exterminate large numbers of Sithe! The other Autarchs had a much rougher time of it. Many of the Sithe were protected behind castles or formations, and these Autarchs had to go through the time-consuming process of breaking through those defenses.

“Keep on killing them for all I care. How many can you possibly get rid of, Autarchs?” Iyerre sat upon his throne. He was quite calm despite the many messages he received from the squads he had sent out. “I have far, far more warriors under my command than your civilization does, and I have far more powerful treasures as well! Even if you massacre half of them, the other half is more than enough to ensure that countless

Hegemons and Emperors belonging to your Chaosverse will die.”

Iyerre didn’t care at all about the casualties his subordinates had suffered. Even if they died, their truesoul fragments would return to the Sithe Chaosverse; there was no permanent loss at all.

However, when the native Hegemons and Emperors perished their truesouls would be devoured by Sithe techniques, resulting in this Chaosverse being weakened. Eventually the sheer magnitude of deaths would result in the Chaosverse being so weak that he, Iyerre, would have a very good chance of becoming the Lord of Chaos for this Chaosverse.

“Just keep fighting.” Iyerre was in full control of the war. He knew exactly how many losses he had suffered and the cultivators had suffered.

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Ji Ning was feeling increasingly anxious. He killed at a very fast pace, but the majority of his time was spent traveling. The Chaosverse was simply too vast! The Sixteen Realmverses Alliance was only possible because those sixteen realmverses were quite close to each other. There were many realmverses which were extremely far from each other, which was why the empty space between realmverses was known as the ‘Great Dark’ to many. Ning would usually need anywhere from half a day to two days to travel from realmverse to realmverse.

The more he and his six peers slew, the fewer of their own Hegemons and Emperors would die. But if things continued the way they currently were, they were going to suffer enormous losses in Hegemons and Emperors on their own side as well.

“The Skywitch battlefield is in desperate need of assistance.”

“The Ninelamps battlefield is in desperate need of assistance.”

“The Dragoncaller battlefield is in desperate need of assistance.”

One report came after another. A total of twenty-six battlefronts were in dire straits right now. They had achieved great successes in some battlefronts, but these twenty-six were in grave danger! The Sithe had their own ‘elite squads’, and these squads were extraordinarily powerful.

There was nothing Ning could do. All twenty-six of these battlefronts were very far away from him. It would take him over half a month to reach even the nearest one.

"I'll go to the Dragoncaller battlefield," Autarch Skyfeeder replied. "I'll need three days to get there." She was the only one who could go respond. None of the other Autarchs would get there in time.

'Desperate need of assistance' meant that the situation was so grim, they wouldn't be able to last much longer without help. In the end, they were only able to preserve half their forces in the Dragoncaller battlefield. They lost everyone else in all twenty-five of the other battlefronts! Clearly, while the Autarchs were busy massacring the Sithe they found, their own Hegemons and Emperors were being slain on the field of battle as well. This was a truly ruinous war of attrition.

Many Sithe died, but at least they would have a chance at being brought back to life! Those native cultivators who had been slain, however, could never be brought back if the soul-eater technique was used after their deaths. They became true martyrs for this war.

Ning had no choice but to suppress the rage he felt. Early on, he imprisoned as many of the Sithe as he could... but now, he was beginning to kill more and more of them!

Chapter 4: Powerless

A giant black warship hovered in the empty silence of space, completely unmoving. A white-robed figure was standing directly above the giant black warship. He seemed tiny in comparison, but his aura was utterly overwhelming and his eyes were ice-cold.

"It's just too big. The Chaosverse is too damn big." Ji Ning felt a sense of powerlessness.

More than half a year had gone past since the war had erupted. During this half year, all seven of the most powerful leaders of the cultivators civilizations had been scouring the Chaosverse for any and all traces of the Sithe, but the Chaosverse was simply enormous! Usually, battlefronts would consist of groupings of at least ten different realmverses, sometimes even more! Every single battlefield was very far away from the others, and the Sithe warships were just as sparse and hard to find.

The Sithe were constantly making adjustments as well. Each time Ning and the other Autarchs attacked a location, the Sithe would adjust for it and make it even harder for the Autarchs to find their other warships.

The warships were doing their best to avoid the Autarchs, while Ning and the others were doing their best to find them!

"The Tongwu battlefield is in desperate need of assistance." Yet another report came flying in.

"The Tongwu battlefield?" Ning sighed to himself. "It is too far away. It would take me twenty days at maximum speed to get there!"

"Time to continue." Ning waved his hand, collecting the warship and then continuing to warp through space and search for the Sithe. It was like searching for a needle in the bottom of the sea. This was a very robotic and numbing process; the Autarchs were relying on their overwhelming strength to scan large areas and 'fish' out a warship or two! This process was clumsy, yet it was also the most efficient process available.

"Have you noticed? This war has been quite odd," Autarch Titanos sent to the other six. "The war has gone on for over half a year and the battles have been fierce. Now that the Sithe know where we are, it has become harder and harder for us to find their warships. All of this is expected, but... we haven't encountered any Sithe Exalts at all!"

While hunting and killing, the Autarchs continued to exchange messages with each other. The hunting process wasn't all that mentally taxing, after all.

"Right. I haven't found any Sithe Exalts," Autarch Ekong agreed.

"I haven't found a single one of them either. Judging from the various reports which have been sent by cultivators throughout our Chaosverse, no Sithe Exalts have appeared at all," Autarch Stonerule said.

"I haven't found any either. Logically speaking, the Sithe should have many Exalts ready to fight," Ning replied.

"They've lain dormant for aeons... I wouldn't be surprised if they had dozens of Exalts ready to take part in this battle. But, they haven't deployed a single one. This is extremely odd. Everyone, while hunting down the Sithe you need to constantly stay on your guard! I'm worried that there's some sort of a plot behind the Sithe Exalts remaining in hiding," Autarch Titanos sent mentally.

Autarch Skyfeeder agreed, "Perhaps they don't know that Darknorth has become an Emperor, but they know that we have an Eternal Omega Sword Dao! Thus, the Sithe should know very well that this war against us is their final chance. If they lose, we'll only grow even more powerful in the future and they won't stand any chance against us. By all rights, they should be throwing everything they have against us! As soon as that behemoth hive appeared, I could tell that the Sithe had made extraordinary preparations for this war. For no Exalts to have appeared a full half-year after the war began... we really do need to be careful."

"Agreed."

"Stay on your guard."

"Keep scanning at all times. Don't let yourself fall into a trap."

The six Autarchs and Ning were all quite confident in their abilities. They weren't like the Sithe, who suffered from rejection by the Chaosverse and were unable to use the Dao! Ning and the Autarchs had access to virtually limitless amounts of power. During the previous war, not a single Autarch had fallen.

"The Purejade battlefield is in desperate need of assistance!" Suddenly, another report arrived.

"The Purejade battlefield?" Ning was startled. He reflexively scanned his mental map of the Chaosverse, mentally placing the Purejade battlefield. It was fairly close to him. "I need two days. I'll go right away."

"Alright, Darknorth. I'll leave it to you. I'll tell them to hold on until you arrive," Autarch Stonerule said.

Swoosh! Ning began to fly at maximum speed towards the Purejade battlefield.

If he spent these two days slowly scanning, he might be able to locate one or two Sithe warships... but rescuing more of their own cultivators was more important than killing the Sithe! This was because when their cultivators died, their truesouls would be devoured by the Sithe soul-eater technique. This would harm the Chaosverse itself and make it impossible to revive them.

"I hope they can hold on until I arrive," Ning murmured softly. The leaders in a battlefield would only beg for assistance when they could sense that they really weren't able to hold out for much longer. This would generally only happen once the enemies revealed their full power and launched a final, all-out attack! Thus, the battlefronts were usually lost shortly after the distress calls were sent.

Sometimes, the cultivators would last for four or five days. Other times, the cultivators would be wiped out before a single day passed.

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The Purejade battlefield. This was a place where an awesome astral

river flowed through the region in multiple looks, almost like a snake coiling around itself. At the very center of the coiling flows of the river was an enormous castle, and the castle held over a hundred figures within it.

Nearly half were Hegemons, while the rest were all normal Emperors. They poured all of their Immortal energy into maintaining this powerful castle, which was the core of the mighty defensive formation which protected them. Many of their avatars and comrades were situated throughout the astral river, where they were responsible for protecting important spots and were fighting against the Sithe.

“Autarch Stonerule sent word,” a red-bearded Hegemon roared. “Two days! In just two days, an Autarch will arrive to save us!”

“What?!”

“We’re saved!” Some of the Hegemons and Emperors who had been on the verge of despair instantly grew excited. This was just a second-class battlefield! They didn’t expect that one of the extremely powerful Sithe elite squads would attack this place. At first, the Sithe had hidden their true power. They had first battled for more than a month to verify the defensive strength of the local cultivators, then had revealed their true prowess and launched a final assault.

Once the Sithe revealed their true power, the cultivators were instantly beaten backwards and forced to retreat to their final defensive lines within and around this castle. All they could do was try to delay as long as they could.

“Two days! Just two days! If we can hold on for just two days it’ll be the damn Sithe who die, not us!” the red-bearded elder howled.

“My brothers and sisters, fight on! If we can hold for two days, we’ll all make it out alive!” The voice rang out from the castle and echoed in the minds of the Hegemons and Emperors who were stationed within the astral river which coiled around the castle.

“Hold on! We must hold on!”

“We only need to hold on for two days.”

The battle continued. The Sithe furiously pressed the assault, while all of the defenders were equally frenzied in resisting. Even so, more and more of the defenders were defeated. First, it was their avatars which were destroyed. After that, it was up for them to use their true bodies to endure and fight on.

"Remember, even if you know you are going to die, you need to try and stay a safe distance away from them. Avoid that truesoul-eating technique or you'll never have a chance of being brought back!"

"If you are out of options, self-detonate after you reach a sufficient distance."

Bang! One defensive formation after another began to collapse, with most of the various Hegemons and Emperors electing to self-detonate. In doing so, their truesoul fragments blasted outwards and then quickly vanished. The Sithe soul-eater technique was limited in range, and self-detonation often caused some of the truesoul fragments to blast so far out that they returned to the Chaosverse.

"Hurry up! It's been two days. Hurry up and come!"

"Why hasn't he arrived yet?!"

The Hegemons and Emperors were still fighting back, hoping beyond hope...

BOOM! Suddenly, a figure stepped out of nowhere in the empty space above the coiling river. His entire form was blazing with energy, making it impossible to see him clearly.

"AUTARCH!!!!" All of the surviving cultivators let out cries of joy and excitement.

"That's one of those native Autarchs! Quick, flee!" The Sithe who had been pressing the assault using their many treasures were stunned by the Autarch's arrival. They had been trying to wrap things up as soon as possible, so that they could immediately depart and move to the next target. It would be quite hard to locate them after they left... but unfortunately, a cultivator Autarch had made it here in time!

The dazzling golden figure above them stared downwards coldly. Boom! A wave of invisible energy instantly swept across the region, extinguishing the auras of the attacking Sithe. Only a tiny percent of the Sithe who had been inside heartforce-proof warships managed to survive, but just a heartbeat later all of them died as well. The only ones Ning spared and took away with him were the ‘lucky’ Sithe descendants.

“Thankfully, at least half have survived.” Ning surveyed the castle below him, nodding to himself when he saw how many Hegemons and Emperors had made it.

“Thank you, Autarch!” The Hegemons and Emperors all felt excitement and gratitude. They knew that the vast majority of distress calls went unanswered, as the Autarchs simply couldn’t make it in time.

Ning nodded, then turned and left. He didn’t take any of the warships with him, electing to leave them behind with the survivors in a bid to strengthen their decimated forces.

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After saving that battlefield from defeat, Ning began to patrol the cosmos once more. Every so often, he’d exchange a message with the other Autarchs.

“The Hiddencloud battlefield is in desperate need of assistance.” Yet another report came. This time, it caused Ning to blink. The Hiddencloud battlefield? Wasn’t... wasn’t that the place where the disciple he was proudest of, his second disciple ‘Green Bamboo’ Yang Quding, was located?

Few of Ning’s friends were taking part in this battle, and those few that did take part were the ones in the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance, such as Nuwa. As for ‘Green Bamboo’ Yang Quding, he was fighting alongside his own friends in the Hiddencloud battlefield. Ning had naturally memorized his location.

“That’s more than twenty-six days away from me.” Ning’s heart turned cold. He couldn’t help but send mentally to the other six, “Can any of you make it there? My disciple Green Bamboo is there.”

"Your disciple, Darknorth?" At a time like this, no one would bother accusing Ning of selfishness. Who could be truly and completely selfless?

"I can't make it in time."

"That's too far away."

"The closest ones to it are the two of us, Darknorth," Autarch Skyfeeder replied. "I need nineteen days to get there. That's too much time, and they won't be able to hold out for that long. Thus far, the maximum survival time after sending a distress call has been just barely ten days."

Ning fell silent. There was nothing he could do... Nineteen days... Autarch Skyfeeder could probably wipe out over ten warships during that period of time. It wasn't worth it to give that up just to try and save the Hiddencloud battlefield, especially seeing as how that battle would almost assuredly be completely lost after nineteen days.

Ning wasn't just Green Bamboo's master. He was also one of the seven most powerful leaders of this Chaosverse, responsible for safeguarding every part of it!

"Nineteen days is too long," Ning replied softly. "Considering the grand scheme of things, it isn't worth it. Forget it."

Ning said nothing else. He went back to hunting for Sithe in the Great Dark.

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RWX's Thoughts

Taking bets on if Green Bamboo makes it or not. Whaddya think?

Chapter 5: Death Holds No Fear

Ji Ning continued his search for the Sithe throughout the Great Dark, his heart filled with sorrow and anxiety.

"Green Bamboo... there's nothing your master can do. I cannot save you. You have to escape. You have to," Ning murmured to himself.

With no Autarch nearby to render assistance, it was all-but guaranteed that the 'Hiddencloud battlefield' which Yang Quding was located in would be overwhelmed. When this happened, the Hegemons and Emperors wouldn't be so foolish as to just fight to the bitter end. Once they knew that they were going to lose and that no help was forthcoming, they would begin to flee and focus on keeping themselves alive.

However, the Sithe had many Hegemons and even more treasures. The fleeing cultivator Hegemons would scatter in every direction, but they would be hunted down one-by-one. The number of Hegemons who managed to successfully escape could be counted on one hand, and in some cases none would escape.

Ning, however, still held out hope. His disciple 'Green Bamboo' had a perfect Dao-heart, was an Otherverse Lord, and had treasures which Ning had given him. He was absolutely one of the most powerful Hegemons around, far more powerful than the Lonely King had ever been. In fact, he was close to the Blazesun Ruler in power! Alas, no individual no matter how strong could possibly withstand an entire army. Still... Ning felt that there was some hope that this disciple of his would be able to escape and stay alive.

"Damn. Damn! If my avatar wasn't trapped in that hive, it could also take responsibility over a zone. I might be closer to the Hiddencloud battlefield and able to rescue my disciple." Ning felt rather resentful.

Right now, a total of thirteen Autarch-class combatants were scattered throughout the entire Chaosverse, each responsible for a specific zone. Ning's avatar was also an Autarch-class combatant, but it was tied up in the Annihilation Hive.

Within the black tower at the nexus of the Annihilation Hive. The golden-robed Ning was seated in the lotus position in midair, his eyes closed in meditation.

Rumble... an awesome aura of energy was swirling around him in rippling layers. These circular ripples of power emanated the aura of the deep earth, of grass and vegetation, of flowing water, of blazing flames, of indestructible ores. All the different ripples were circling around Ning, and as they moved closer and closer towards him, they gradually began to transform into ripples of space and ripples of time... and at the very heart, on Ning himself, they transformed into ripples of terrifying destructive power. Everything near Ning was being devoured and then annihilated.

This was raw, pure annihilation! All types of energy were being annihilated, and not even the Chaosverse was able to resist this annihilatory power. The profound mysteries behind this power surpassed even the Destruction Daobirth Essence of Autarch Ekong, the Autarch of Annihilation. If Ning could truly and successfully master this technique, he would have gained access to a technique of absolutely incredible power.

"I'm still not quite there yet. It just isn't quite right." Ning had drawn upon his six million chaos cycles of training and the many insights he had gained from the sphere of annihilation, but he still felt that it was a bit too artificial and forced.

The Dao was, above all else, natural. Only a Dao which was complete and natural, not artificial, could be described as 'perfect'. If you simply tried to artificially imitate this destructive power, which Ning called 'Oblivion', you would end up being far off from the real thing.

"Oblivion... it utterly destroys all things in its path. All forms of energy... the Five Elements... Yin and Yang... Darkness and Light... space and time... everything in the Chaosverse can be devoured and destroyed. This is what 'Oblivion' represents.

"I started with a foundation of the Five Elements, then drew upon the mysteries of Yin and Yang as well as that of the Cycle of Light and Dark,

transforming them into pure spacetime which is then obliterated, producing fundamental particles where space and time no longer exist.” Ning continued to ponder this problem. He didn’t know what insights he was lacking, but this process had indeed resulted in him gaining a much deeper level of understanding in all of his Daos.

If it hadn’t been for him meditating on ‘Oblivion’, he never would’ve understood how the Five Elements could be completely converted into spacetime.

Space and time were two unique types of wave-particle energies. When the two acted upon each other, they gave birth to Yin and Yang, Light and Dark, and also the Five Elements which birthed countless other things.

“It lacks... a soul. It lacks that quintessential quality of being part of nature itself.” Ning continued to dissect many different Daos, ruminating over their connections to each other as he compared them to how the ‘sphere of annihilation’ operated...

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Ning’s avatar continued to meditate on the Oblivion Sword Dao, and there was really nothing else it could do. Only when it learned how to destroy the ‘sphere of annihilation’ would it be able to leave this place. Until that happened the avatar would have to stay there, continuing to maintain the reverse-vortex formation.

The distant Hiddencloud battlefield. The native Hegemons and Emperors here suffered one defeat after another. They had already retreated to the final, most powerful defensive formation they had.

Within a beautiful world of flowers and grass. An azure-robed man was staring into the skies... and the skies were trembling. Dimensional cracks could be seen.

“Green Bamboo, any news?”

“Sword Immortal Green Bamboo, will the Autarchs come and save us?” Behind him was a host of Hegemons and Emperors. Thus far, over 70% of their original forces were still alive! This was because they had all

sacrificed their avatars during the most dangerous parts of the battle. Now, their avatars had all been destroyed. Even Sword Immortal Green Bamboo's avatar had died in battle!

They had already retreated to the back lines. So long their final defenses remained, they could keep fighting... but once their defenses were breached, they would all be massacred.

"Calm down. I've already asked for aid," Sword Immortal Green Bamboo said.

The other Hegemons and Emperors were waiting anxiously as they maintained the defensive formation. Sword Immortal Green Bamboo was the disciple of the legendary Daolord Darknorth, and was someone favored by Autarch Ekong. Even though the fact that Ning had succeeded in his second Daomerge and become an Emperor remained a hidden secret, many felt certain that the Autarchs would come to save Green Bamboo so long as they could make it in time.

Suddenly, Sword Immortal Green Bamboo's face turned grim. "The Autarchs won't be able to make it in time." He swept his gaze across the other Hegemons and Emperors, all of whom turned pale. The hope they had felt instantly vanished, with many revealing looks of despair.

"We're out of options. We'll have to fend for ourselves," Green Bamboo said. "The 'microworld' formations protecting this grand formation have all been defeated. Even if we keep fighting, we'll only be able to last another two or three days before being completely overwhelmed. By then, none of us will be able to escape."

All the Hegemons and Emperors present agreed with this assessment.

"Thus... we should begin coming up with ideas for how we can escape," Green Bamboo said.

The supreme leaders of the cultivators had long ago given them their orders – if they couldn't win, they were to flee! Every single survivor counted! If they died in battle, they would see their truesouls devoured by that soul-eater technique. Their very Chaosverse itself would be weakened by this! In other words, just surviving was a form of victory.

"The Sithe have set up many scanning formations, and they have even more Hegemons and Emperors than we do. Even if we scatter and flee, our chances are very low," an Emperor said worriedly.

"There's always a chance," Green Bamboo said. "Let's do our best to deceive the Sithe and force them to disperse their forces. Every single survivor counts as a victory to me."

"We can use many of the other formations and treasures scattered throughout the Hiddencloud battlefield which we previously abandoned to slow the Sithe down."

"I myself am very skilled in using illusions and creating doppelgangers. Given the right treasures, I can make it difficult for the Sithe to know where our real members have gone."

The various Hegemons and Emperors all had their own specialties, and they all began to propose ideas. However, they all knew that the Sithe had their own specialties as well. The Sithe warship was a particular problem. It was so fast that it was on par with the Blacksun. Only Autarchs were able to catch them and destroy them! The warships also were outfitted with extremely sensitive tracking formations as well. Thus, very few of them would probably be able to escape its pursuit.

"Green Bamboo." There were four men and women standing next to Green Bamboo. One of them, a muscular and crimson-armored man, said in an awkward voice: "It's all my fault. I was the one to invite you to join us here at the Hiddencloud battlefield. If you were alongside Nuwa, Realmslord Windgrace, and the Paragon of Pills in their battlefield, you wouldn't be in this situation."

The battlefields were all divided up according to rank and status. The Sixteen Realmverses Alliance and the otherverse the Paragon of Pills lived in were all very close to each other, and so they were grouped together into a single battlefield. That was the battlefield which would protect the homeland of 'Daolord Darknorth', a first-class battlefield which would be very difficult to overcome.

The only reason Green Bamboo had come here was for the sake of his

lifelong friends who had also come here.

“It’s fine. To live and die amongst my friends is a blessing. What is there to fear?” Green Bamboo smiled as he looked at these four dear friends of his.

“Green Bamboo.” A red-robed maiden looked at Green Bamboo, then suddenly reached out to take his hand in her own.

Green Bamboo immediately revealed an excited, happy look as he gazed at the red-robed woman. “DawnClear...”

This woman was the real reason why Green Bamboo had chosen to come to this battlefield. He had wooed Hegemon DawnClear for many years now, but she had always hesitated. Now that she had taken him by the hand, she had clearly chosen to truly accept him.

“Hahaha... death holds no fear for me!” Green Bamboo laughed loudly, deliriously excited and happy.

Chapter 6: Fangs Revealed (Part 1)

DawnClear smiled as well. She knew that it was very likely that both of them would die, and so she cast away all her misgivings and followed her heart.

"Congratulations, Green Bamboo. Congratulations, big sister DawnClear." the other female Hegemon next to them said with a smile.

"Congratulations! Who would've thought that something so wonderful would happen during this calamity? Once we all leave this place safely, we'll have to hold a proper celebration," the muscular man said with a laugh.

"Yes, we must celebrate!" The other nearby Hegemons and Emperors all agreed. They were searching for a ray of light to illuminate them in this darkest hour. In truth, they all knew that the number of survivors could probably be counted on one hand... and if they weren't lucky, every single one of them would die!

After spending an hour in discussion, Green Bamboo's group of Hegemons and Emperors came up with an escape plan. They would separate into a total of fifty-nine squads which would flee in different directions. That way, they would stand the best chance of making it out alive. If they stayed together, they would be wiped out together.

"Everyone." Green Bamboo swept his gaze across all the others present. "The plan has been settled. Let us carry it out! I hope that after this all ends, we'll be able to meet again."

"Let's meet again."

"Let's meet again."

"Let's meet again." The many Hegemons and Emperors nearby all echoed his words. They were all filled with the desire to stay alive and were determined to risk it all in one final clash attempt.

A short while later, a towering warship appeared before the grand formation which protected the Hiddencloud battlefield. In front of the

warship was a large group of Sithe Hegemons and Emperors who were employing their treasures to furiously assault the giant globe-shaped formation before them.

Suddenly, streams of power began to shoot out from deep within the formation. Some looked like streams of dark mist, some looked like bolts of thunder, some looked like pillars of solid light. These various types of energy all shot out in a counter-attack, instantly suppressing the Sithe offensive.

"They've launched their final counter-attacks! Haha! Keep attacking! They're at the brink of collapse!" The Sithe leader who was watching within that towering warship felt extremely confident as they watched from within... but moments later, his face turned grim.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Countless figures shot out of the formation and began to flee, each going in a different direction.

"They're running away! There are so many of them. Which ones are the real ones?"

"I can't tell, can you?"

"Captain, which ones are real?" The many Sithe battling outside were all waiting for orders.

"They want to escape?" The Sithe leader stroked his long beard. His warship could detect even the approach of an Autarch! Its scanning abilities were absolutely unparalleled, and it almost instantly was able to detect which figures were real and which were false.

"They've split up into a total of fifty-nine squads, with three in each squad at most. Many of the squads are single-person squads. They've split up into fifty-nine different directions. I now order you to..." The Sithe leader began to issue his orders, deploying different Sithe warriors to chase after different squads. This warship was composed of Sithe elites, and it had an extraordinary number of Hegemons and Emperors.

"Chase after them separately. Let none escape," the Sithe leader commanded mentally.

“Understood.”

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“Flee!” A green-robed Emperor was fleeing for his life. “I’m too weak. The Sithe would probably be able to track even Hegemons who tried to warp through spacetime. A normal Epmeror like myself would stand no chance at all.” The green-robed Emperor knew just how slim his chances were. “We spent an enormous amount of effort in prepping the Hiddencloud battlefield. There are many powerful formations here that are intact; we were simply forced to abandon them. If I hide inside one of them, they wouldn’t necessarily be able to find me.”

He was going to hide inside one of the remaining formations to catch his breath. Once the danger was past, he would then flee to a more distant location.

Swoosh. The green-robed Emperor quietly snuck into a nearby formation, easily taking control over its great power.

Swoosh. Swoosh. Swoosh. Three figures simultaneously appeared outside. All three were Sithe Black Emperors. The Sithe knew that this target was just an ordinary Emperor, and so they had simply sent three Black Emperors to deal with him. Each of them had Hegemonic power, after all; catching an ordinary Emperor would be very easy.

“He fled into a formation?” The three Black Emperors exchanged a glance.

“Seal off the entire area around the formation. I’ll stand guard outside while the two of you follow him inside,” one of the Black Emperors said.

“Alright.”

“Let’s go inside.”

A mere hour later, the green-robed Emperor who had fled inside the formation had been driven to the brink of despair. Finally, one of the Black Emperors used a sky-blotting palm to smash him into dust!

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“Let’s run!” Two Hegemons fled in a blind panic, warping through spacetime over ten times. When they saw that they were about to be caught, they finally brought out a realmship. “Let’s run.”

The two Hegemons immediately began to flee within the realmship. As they did, the Sithe squad pursuing them came to a halt and sent a message back: “They have a realmship. We aren’t able to catch up to them.”

After a brief period of time passed, the Hegemons began to breathe a bit easier. “Our realmship is flying very fast. We have a chance to escape.”

“We have to make it out of here.” The two Hegemons both clung onto hope... but suddenly, the realmship was unable to warp through spacetime any longer.

“Eh?” Both turned to stare outside the ship. An enormous, towering black warship had just appeared before them, and it was suppressing spacetime for a wide area around it. These warships had all been painstakingly created by the Sithe leader. Even if Ning and other Autarch-class combatants were here, they would have to slowly fly towards the warship rather than simply teleport through spacetime to it. Its power was tremendous!

“We’re finished.” Looks of despair appeared on the faces of the two Hegemons. They exchanged a final glance.

Bang! Bang! The two didn’t hesitate at all. They immediately exploded into two enormous plumes of light which blasted out, reverberating within the realmship. They had chosen to self-detonate! They were far enough from the Sithe that their truesoul fragments stood a good chance of escaping once they self-detonated.

The Autarchs had long ago instructed them to do this. If they self-detonated they might be brought back to life in the future, even if they were Hegemons!

As the Autarchs saw it, they might not be able to revive the Hegemons who died in the endless void between realmverses, but things would be different once their Chaosverse gave birth to a Lord of Chaos. A Chaoslord should be able to bring them back! They believed this because

they had seen from the memories of captured Sithe that slain Sithe Hegemons could be brought back to life. In fact, even Exalts who died in battle could be brought back to life! However, the price was so great that they generally wouldn't be given such preferential treatment unless they had rendered great merits unto the Sithe forces.

Whoosh. The Sithe warship began to emit an invisible, terrifying sucking power which caused the realmship to tumble helplessly towards an enormous opening at the bottom of the warship. Moments later, the opening in the bottom vanished.

"They self-detonated right after we found them. Damn! Most of their truesoul fragments probably escaped us. Let's go back." The black warship immediately warped through spacetime to return to the Hiddencloud battlefield. This entire process had merely taken a few brief moments; they had almost instantly located and eliminated the realmship, then returned to their normal position.

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"I won't be able to escape... but those damn Sithe can forget about devouring my truesoul!" a horned, willowy woman howled angrily.

BOOM! She transformed into a burst of light.

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Self-detonation. Self-detonation. Killed. Self-detonation...

Some who weren't able to self-detonate in time ended up being killed by the Sithe, as did some who hesitated. The majority, however, had the wisdom to understand when flight was hopeless and thus chose to self-detonate.

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Green Bamboo and Hegemon DawnClear were escaping together. As for their other friends, they had all scattered into different groups. If they all fled together, they would probably all be caught together.

Hegemon DawnClear smiled as she glanced at Green Bamboo, who was

using all his power to bring her alongside him in his flight.

"Why do you keep staring at me?" Green Bamboo teased. Even though they were being pursued, they were both quite relaxed.

"It's nothing," Hegemon DawnClear said with a smile. "I just suddenly feel so very, very happy. Even if we don't manage to escape, dying together is fine as well."

"What nonsense are you spewing? We're definitely going to escape. Don't worry." Green Bamboo continued to flee at top speed.

Boom! Suddenly, a planet-sized castle appeared behind them. A voice boomed out from within the castle: "You must be the leader of the forces stationed in the Hiddencloud battlefield. You brought us quite a bit of trouble, kid. Now stop struggling! There's no way you'll escape."

Green Bamboo paled slightly. His greatest fear was this. He had been the most powerful cultivator in the Hiddencloud battlefield. When he had sent his avatar to battle against the Sithe, the Sithe had been forced to pay a very high price to defeat it. Without question, the Sithe were paying close attention to him as he fled. They had even sent one of their planet-sized castles to pursue him! Those things warped through spacetime far faster than realmships could.

"DawnClear, remember to bind the treasure I gave you earlier. It's something which will allow you to warp a tremendous distance through spacetime and escape," Green Bamboo immediately sent mentally. "I'll stop them for now. You need to run! Once you reach a safe distance, use that item. It'll let you flee incredibly fast, and if you can avoid detection for ten seconds they won't be able to find any trace of you."

"No...!" Hegemon DawnClear grew anxious. "What about you? Are you just going to throw your life away?"

Chapter 7: Fangs Revealed (Part 2)

As a Hegemon, DawnClear had an extraordinary Dao-heart. She had already discarded all of her previous concerns and had chosen to become Dao-companions with Sword Immortal Green Bamboo. How could she possibly fear death?

"If we delay, neither of us will escape," Green Bamboo sent frantically. "DawnClear, you aren't strong enough to slow them down. Only I can do that! Don't worry. After you flee, I'll do my best to escape as well. If I cannot, I'll choose to self-detonate. I'll tell you a secret which you absolutely cannot share with anyone else - my master Darknorth has used the 'Truesoul Everlasting' technique and has redone the Daomerge. He's now comparable to Autarchs in power. So long as any of my truesoul fragments remain, I'll definitely be brought back in the future."

Hegemon DawnClear was startled. So the legendary Daolord Darknorth had actually successfully used that technique to repeat his Daomerge?

"In other words, even if I am forced to self-detonate I'll still be brought back," Green Bamboo said urgently. "And I have other tricks up my sleeve as well. I'll stand a good chance of escaping on my own. Hurry up and go! If you die, there'd be no point in me living."

"Fine." Hegemon DawnClear no longer hesitated. She knew that as she was much weaker, it would be harder for her truesoul fragments to escape the Sithe soul-eater technique.

Whoosh! Hegemon DawnClear turned and immediately fled. After fleeing for a time, she managed to leave the reach of spacetime suppression. She turned to glance backwards, seeing Green Bamboo already engaged in a fight against the Sithe.

"We'll definitely be together in the future." Hegemon DawnClear gritted her teeth, then immediately warped through spacetime and disappeared.

"Ahahaha!" Green Bamboo himself was in an excellent rule. A total of nine leaf-shaped treasures were around him, and he was able to use them to shockingly powerful effect with his perfect Dao-heart. Each of his

strikes was comparable to attacks from the Blazesun Ruler!

Boom! Boom! Boom! The two sides continued to blast attacks at each other.

"The cultivator leader of this battlefield is really powerful. Given his might, I imagine he has a perfect Dao-heart."

"Anyone who can gain a perfect Dao-heart in this backwards Chaosverse has to be one of its truly peerless geniuses." The Sithe continued to launch attacks from their castle. They held the upper hand and it was clear that victory should be in their grasp... but somehow, it continued to elude them.

In truth, this was a strategy which Green Bamboo was using. He wanted to give these Sithe the feeling that they could kill him by themselves, and so they wouldn't be in a hurry to report it to their higher-ups.

They battled for ten full seconds.

"Ugh. This cultivator leader is a pain to deal with. Hurry up and report it to our superiors. Who knows how long it would take for us to kill him? Hurry up and report it to them so we can hunt down that female cultivator next." These warships were able to scan a realmverse-sized area in a twinkling! Even realmships would produce trails when flying that could be picked up by Sithe scanners, which was why escape was very difficult.

Green Bamboo felt rather relaxed. "It's been over ten seconds. DawnClear has probably escaped by now." He had told DawnClear that DarkNorth would revive him so long as his truesoul fragments escaped, but that wasn't the complete truth. Green Bamboo knew a great deal about this war. He knew that this was the last chance the Sithe had, and that they would battle to the bitter end. It was possible that even his master DarkNorth would die! If that happened, Green Bamboo might not be brought back either.

Rumble... suddenly, a spacetime ripple manifested. A heartbeat later, a towering warship appeared as well, once more suppressing spacetime in the surrounding area.

"Not good." Green Bamboo's face tightened.

Boom! All nine leaf-type treasures instantly flew back to circle around Green Bamboo, 'gripping' him as they then transformed into a streak of light that flew away at incredible speeds.

"You think you'll escape?" The Sithe immediately moved to pursue.

BOOM! The distant streak which was Green Bamboo suddenly blew apart into an enormous blast of light as he exploded.

Even as he self-detonated, he remained calm. A little smile was on his face to the very end. It was all worth it. So long as his beloved survived, everything was worth it.

"Another self-detonation. Ugh. How many of his truesoul fragments did we manage to capture?"

"Just part of it, I think. Almost all of these natives have chosen to self-detonate from afar. We're usually only able to capture part of the fragments."

"Continue the hunt. He had a woman with him."

After forcing Green Bamboo to commit suicide, the Sithe immediately began to chase after Hegemon DawnClear. Alas, no matter what they tried they were unable to find any traces of her.

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Rumble...

An iridescent ring-shaped treasure was warping through spacetime with ease, moving just as fast as the Blacksun but with even greater secrecy. Ten seconds after its initial use, all traces of its activation would vanish. This had been Green Bamboo's personal escape treasure. He had only trained for a short period of time but had a perfect Dao-heart. This meant that he was viewed as an incredibly talented prospect for this Chaosverse who could very well become an Autarch in the future.

This was why he had been given such a valuable treasure... but in the end, he had given it to Hegemon DawnClear.

“No...” While fleeing, Hegemon Dawnclear suddenly turned to stare at the direction from where she had just fled. She could vaguely sense through the power of karma that the most important person in her life had just perished. The karma binding them together had fallen apart, leaving behind an empty feeling that tore at her heart. Her tears began to fall.

“Green Bamboo, you promised me that you’d be able to escape. You promised.” Tears blurred Hegemon Dawnclear’s vision. “I’m sure they’ll bring you back. You are senior Darknorth’s disciple. They definitely will.”

In the end, Hegemon Dawnclear was the only person to survive the battle at the Hiddencloud battlefield. Everyone else died.

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Ning was soaring through the Great Dark, searching for Sithe and destroying them when he found them. Suddenly, he turned pale and his heart trembled.

Ning turned to stare towards the direction of the incredibly distant Hiddencloud battlefield. “Green Bamboo!” Ning could sense through the power of karma that his disciple was gone. He had vanished from this Chaosverse. Clearly, his truesoul had been destroyed.

“Not even someone as powerful as Green Bamboo was able to escape?” Ning was filled with agony.

In truth, if Green Bamboo had fled on his own he would’ve had a 30% - 40% chance of escaping. Instead, he had given this chance to Hegemon Dawnclear and had gone to delay their foes.

“SITHE!!!” Ning cast away his pain, replacing it with a cold and hard determination. This was war... a war which would determine the destinies of two different civilizations! Many, many Hegemons had died and would die in this war. Green Bamboo was just one of them.

“DIE!” Ning knew that all he could do was to annihilate as many Sithe as he could.

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Time continued to flow on, and the war only grew increasingly deadly. Four years of frenzied warfare went by in the blink of an eye. The initial wave of frenzied Sithe attacks finally began to ebb, as they suffered so many casualties that they were unable to continue assaulting all of the various battlefields.

During these four years, Ning and the rest of the thirteen Autarch-class combatants had been hunting them down nonstop. They had annihilated so many Sithe that in many areas, the remaining Sithe Hegemons and Emperors were only able to pose low levels of danger.

“All of you shall die.” Autarch Ekong descended upon a battlefield, immediately blinking inside the towering Sithe warship.

“Die, die, die!” Autarch Ekong was the Autarch of Annihilation, and he used his awesome power to completely massacre the many Hegemons and Emperors within the warship.

Right at this moment, Autarch Ekong’s face suddenly turned grim. He immediately blinked outside the warship, only to see that the battlefield had just changed completely.

An absolutely massive temple complex had just appeared in the area, and he was inside the complex. The warship he had just destroyed was minuscule by comparison! The vast temple had a total of seven miniature temples surrounding it, and within each of the temples was a figure seated in the lotus position. Judging from their auras, all of them were Sithe Exalts.

“So the Sithe Exalts have finally shown themselves... seven at one go!” Autarch Ekong turned pale. He could sense the incredible threat they posed to him. They could kill him. This vast temple was entirely capable of destroying him!

“Autarch Ekong, I presume? You won’t be able to escape.”

“Prepare to die.” The seven Sithe Exalts had frenzied looks in their eyes. They knew just how powerful Autarchs were, and so they had made plentiful preparations for this battle.

Autarch Ekong immediately sent word to Ning and the other five Autarchs. Four years after the war had erupted, the Sithe Exalts were finally making their move. The Sithe had finally revealed their fangs!

During the Dawn War, the Autarchs had also encountered multiple dangerous situations. They didn't even dare to truly assault the heart of the Sithelands and instead chose to simply seal away the outer perimeters! Creatures like the giant tree, which Autarch Titanos and Autarch Mogg had spent a fairly long period of time to kill, was just one of many tools the Sithe had prepared for this war.

The Annihilation Hive had shown without the shadow of a doubt that the Sithe were terrifyingly powerful. They were more than strong enough to threaten the Autarchs now.

If the Autarchs were truly invincible, Ning and the others could've simply gathered all the Hegemons and placed them into their own estate-worlds. If the seven of them just stayed together in one place they would be guaranteed to win, right?

But the truth was that the Autarchs weren't truly invincible... and they knew it. It was possible that they could be killed, which was why they had the Hegemons be scattered across the Chaosverse. This would at least ensure that they weren't destroyed in a single alpha strike! Even if the cultivators lost a few battles, they would still be able to recover in the future.

"After four years of war, the Sithe Hegemons and Emperors are no longer much of a threat to us. The Sithe have finally begun to mobilize their elites," Autarch Titanos sent mentally. "This will be the last great war we shall face! If we win, we'll be able to grow so powerful that we'll never need to fear any invaders ever again. We'll be truly free... but first, we have to win this war."

"This will be the final war, the Dusk War. Let us fight! In victory, we shall be without worries for all of time. If we fail, we may never recover."

Ning and the six Autarchs all understood this concept. Their hearts were filled with unprecedented resolve. There was nothing and no one capable

of shaking their will for battle. They would fight!

Now that the weaker Hegemons and Emperors were no longer a threat, the Sithe Exalts had joined the fray. The final battle had begun!

"If we win, I might be able to one day revive Yu Wei and my friends and disciples. If we lose, everything will be lost. My parents, Brightmoon, my teacher... they'll all be gone. All of civilization will be gone."

"The war to reclaim our destinies has now truly begun." Ning's eyes were blazing with determination.

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RWX's Thoughts

sniff sniff. I liked that guy - RWX

Chapter 8: The Vast Temple

“What’s the situation, Ekong? How strong is that Sithe temple?” Ji Ning and the others were all worried about Autarch Ekong. Given how long the Sithe Exalts had been biding their time, they definitely had been preparing something truly extraordinary to use against the Autarchs. The worst part of it was, Autarch Ekong’s true body was in the trap!

If it had been his avatar which fell into the trap, Ning and the others wouldn’t feel all that worried. If his avatar died, he would merely need a few more years to rebuild a new one. In truth, given the benefits of temporal acceleration just half a month would be needed to create an avatar, albeit it would have at most 50% of his full power.

In a war against the Sithe, that extra 20% of power made a great deal of difference... but if his true body died, then his avatar would die along with it. That was a far greater loss, an irrecoverable one.

“I can’t see anything at all!” Autarch Ekong sent back hurriedly. “Moments ago, I saw that those Sithe Exalts were seated within seven small temples surrounding a big one. They suddenly activated the power of the main temple, causing my surroundings to transform. I’ve now been trapped inside a giant formation in the form of a massive hallway. No matter where I go, I’m unable to escape this hallway. I can’t see through any of the mysteries behind this formation at all!”

“A formation?” Ning, Titanos, Skyfeeder, Mogg, Stonerule, and Bolin were all shocked. Not even an Autarch could make heads or tails out of this formation... how powerful did it have to be?! If Autarch Ekong was unable to escape it, all he could do was wait and endure terrifying attacks from the Sithe Exalts.

“Darknorth and I have some skill in formations. I’m closer to you than he is. Ekong, take care of yourself. My avatar is headed straight towards you and should get there in twelve days!” Autarch Titanos sent. Avatars were just as effective as true bodies when it came to understanding and disassembling formations.

“Alright. Hurry up! Trapped inside this formation, I can’t even find my foes.” Autarch Ekong was rather anxious.

This hallway was merely thirty meters wide, but he could see no end to it. No matter how long he walked, he wasn’t able to walk out of it!

As for the walls? Autarch Ekong had already tried to break through them with force, but clearly there was no way for him to tear through a formation which seven Sithe Exalts had set up with the help of this temple.

“Trapping me here was probably just the first step. Their actual killer attacks will be coming soon.” Autarch Ekong manifested six arm, with three of them holding shields and the other three holding a saber, a sword, and a shuttle. As the Autarch of Annihilation, he was naturally skilled in many different weapons. It was rare, however, that he was forced to use shields to defend himself.

“Twelve days. I have to last for at least twelve days.” Autarch Ekong’s eyes were very tranquil, but he was on high alert.

Ning was very worried about Autarch Ekong, but for now sending Autarch Titanos’ avatar was the best option they had! Ning himself had devised the Sword Formation Dao, but Autarch Titanos had spent countless years analyzing Sithe artifacts and researching Sithe formations. He was just as skilled in the Dao of Formations as Ning was, but he had far more experience in dealing with Sithe techniques.

Last time, Autarch Titanos hadn’t even needed to enter the Annihilation hive before devising the reverse-vortex formation. All he had needed was the information Ning and Mogg had provided!

Although the various Autarchs were most skilled in their own Daobirth Essences, they had other specialties as well. For example, Autarch Bolin had been unable to create the Samsara Daobirth Essence, but he still far eclipsed the Hegemon level when it came to understanding life and death. Not even Ning was a match for him in this regard.

As for Autarch Titanos, he was not only the master of the Karma Daobirth Essence, he was also tremendously skilled in creating and

deconstructing powerful artifacts and formations.

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Five days after Autarch Ekong had first been trapped.

"Whew. That was close. Gentlemen, I nearly died just now," Autarch ekong sent to Ning and the others. "Thankfully, combat is my forte. I was forced to use my invulnerable form to endure those repeated attacks and actually used up over half of my energy. I came so close to dying, haha! But I managed to make it."

Ning and the others all had nervous looks on their faces. This was just day five; Autarch Titanos needed twelve days! How terrifyingly powerful were those attacks, for them to exhaust half of an Autarch's energy reserves in just a few days? Autarchs had nigh-limitless amounts of energy because of how quickly they replenished their energy stores.

"Be careful. You have to hold," Autarch Skyfeeder sent frantically.

"Haha, we're lucky that I'm the one stuck inside. If it was you here, Skyfeeder, you probably wouldn't have been able to withstand those terrifyingly powerful attacks. You'd be dust by now," Autarch Ekong teased. "Don't worry. I've already taken the worst they could dish out. I'm an Autarch, you know! I've already replenished my energy stores."

"What did they use to attack you? How are these attacks so powerful?" Ning sent.

"The attacks are powerful but quite clumsy. Anywhere else, I'd be able to dodge or redirect those attacks with ease. The problem is, I'm trapped in this hallway and have nowhere to go. The attack comes in the form of a faint azure seal which is completely linked to the hallway and seems to be part of it. It just comes smashing at me, giving me nowhere to dodge at all. My only choice is to meet it head-on!"

"This grand seal is marvelously made and it can launch a total of 352 explosive attacks before the energy in it is used up, following by the seal itself dissipating. In the end, I was forced to transform into my invulnerable form in order to endure the terrifying destructive power of

the seal's attacks. Otherwise, I would've been crushed to dust and my truesoul annihilated."

Ning frowned when he heard this. So it was just a giant seal which came smashing at you? But the problem was that when you were trapped in the hallway, there was nowhere to run at all. You had to take those attacks head-on. Autarch Ekong was being treated as a punching bag!

"If I was attacked by three or four of these things in a row, I'd definitely be doomed," Autarch Ekong said.

"Don't worry too much," Autarch Ekong said. "The Sithe are different from us. They are foreigners to our Chaosverse. We can endlessly replenish our energies from our Chaosverse, but they cannot; if they try to take power from the outside world by force, the process will be incredibly slow. They must have prepared many different energy-generating treasures, and each time they use such a powerful attack it will cost them greatly. Most likely, a single giant seal is their absolute limit. There's no way they can just generate four of them in a row without resting. If they could, they would've done so long ago."

"Hah! Killing an Autarch won't be that easy," Autarch Ekong laughed.

As more time passed, the Sithe used many different techniques in an effort to kill Autarch Ekong. They first started with grand seals, then switched to insidious and strange techniques. However, the only ones which truly brought him to the brink of death had been that grand seal and a strange tentacle-attack.

On the twelfth day, Autarch Titanos' avatar finally arrived. He was unable to breach the formations from outside, and so he had no choice but to charge into the temple.

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"Immediately report to our superiors that we've already tied down two Autarch-class combatants. One of them is Autarch Ekong, and it appears to be his true body! If we can kill them, it'll be the equivalent of reducing three Autarch-class combatants from the ranks of the native cultivators. Our temple is mainly meant for trapping foes, which means its attacks

aren't quite strong enough. Hurry up and tell our superiors to send us more forces to wipe the two of them out." The seven Exalts within the vast temple were all extremely excited.

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Ning and the others continued to stand guard over their respective zones, catching and wiping out Sithe Hegemons and Emperors. The overall situation in the Chaosverse had taken a turn for the better, with the native Hegemons now being under much less pressure. However, there were still a number of formidable Sithe warships roaming about.

Five days after Autarch Titanos' avatar joined Autarch Ekong inside that formation.

"Die!" Ning had just discovered a vast black warship which was suppressing spacetime in the surrounding region. However, Ning transformed into a storm of wind and thunder as he shot towards the warship, intending to blink inside and slaughter the Sithe within.

"Not good! That's an Autarch!"

"Flee, quick!" The Sithe Hegemons and Emperors in this warship were members of an elite squad. They had survived the first waves of the war and had achieved many accomplishments, destroying a total of three cultivator battlefronts.

Swoosh! After blinking into the warship, Ning showed no mercy at all to these 'successful' Sithe warriors. Their 'accomplishments' came from murdering local Hegemons.

"All of you can die." A vast wave of heartforce instantly swept out, causing the many Sithe to perish.

Suddenly, Ning's face turned grim and he immediately blinked outside the warship. There, he discovered that the outside world had just changed. He was now within a vast grayish-white temple complex, and there were a total of eight stone pillars surrounding the temple at its margins. A figure was seated in the lotus position atop each of the stone pillars. Although their mighty auras were inferior to Ning's, Ning knew without a shadow of

a doubt that these were all Sithe Exalts. There were eight of them!

“Judging from how you Autarchs have been sweeping through our Emperors, it would seem that you have a total of thirteen Autarch-class combatants! If we factor in the one within the Annihilation Hive, that means you have fourteen in total.” A tall, thin Sithe Exalt who was seated atop one of the stone pillars stared at Ning with glowing eyes. “If each of you has one true body and one avatar... that means you have a total of seven Autarchs! Six we already know about. Now... who is the seventh? Is it a newly promoted Autarch, or is it an Emperor Darknorth who had used a ‘Truesoul Everlasting’ technique?”

Chapter 9: Iyerre's Response

The Sithe Exalts seated on top of the eight stone pillars stared intently at the glowing humanoid before them. None of them could clearly see who that person was.

Who was the seventh leader of the cultivator forces? Was it a new Autarch, or was it an Emperor Darknorth?

This was a question the Sithe paid close attention to. Even Iyerre wanted to know the answer for sure! They would rather see a new Autarch rise than for Daolord Darknorth to have mastered a 'Truesoul Everlasting' technique and become an Eternal Emperor! Someone who was so incredibly talented as to be able to produce a 'Truesoul Everlasting' technique would be extremely dangerous to the Sithe. The pressures of war might well result in him breaking through to becoming an Omega Autarch!

"Why don't you guess." Ning laughed loudly as he transformed into a streak of light that shot off into the distance.

Just as Ning moved, the vast grayish-white temple suddenly burst with power. The eight Sithe Exalts had activated it, causing spacetime to twist and distort around Ning. Ning could sense his surroundings changing, transforming to become a dazzlingly beautiful world of white clouds and fragrant flowers. Ning stood in the center of all of it... and a strange little smile was on his face.

"An illusory formation?" Ning mused. "Playing around with illusions in front of a Heartforce Cultivator... what a joke!" He was both a formations expert and a Heartforce Cultivator. With the aid of his heartforce, he was easily able to understand some of the secrets behind how this formation operated.

Although Ning was completely confident in his chances, he was still very careful and immediately went into his three-headed, six-armed mode with all six Northbow swords at the ready.

"Break!" Ning's sword-light lashed out, and it cut cleanly through the

beautiful illusory world as though the formation was nothing more than tofu. Just like that, the seemingly-formidable formation was defeated! Ning then transformed into a storm of lightning and wind as he flew off into the distance.

“Haha, impressive! You actually defeated our illusions with ease. Of the six known Autarchs in your civilization only Autarch Stonerule, the master of the Illusion Daobirth Essence, would be able to accomplish this. However, we already know that Autarch Stonerule is quite far from here... which means you are most likely Emperor Darknorth,” an ancient voice said.

“Emperor Darknorth, we merely cast those illusions so that we could be sure of your identity. Did you really think you’d actually be able to escape so easily?”

“Await death, Emperor Darknorth.”

“Seal!”

With a rumbling sound, the titanic grayish-white temple complex began to swivel in place, its outer walls rising upwards while its heart sank downwards. Ning had transformed into a storm of lightning and wind, seeking to escape, but just moments later the entire temple had completely transformed in shape. It was now shaped like a hemispheric prison cell that had been completely sealed off, trapping him inside.

He was completely locked into this place. Ning glanced at the securely-fashioned hallway which imprisoned him, then reached out to touch the walls while following his senses.

“Eh?” Ning frowned. “Yet another spacetime-sealing formation?” With but a thought, Ning blinked past the wall and appeared outside... only to see a vast region of empty space. The only thing within this void was many miniature spacetime continuums. The large ones were ten billion kilometers in size, while the small ones were merely tens of thousands of kilometers in size. All of them came together to form an extremely complicated sealing formation that locked away spacetime! There was no way to simply fly out of this place. If he wanted to escape, he would have

to first solve the formation.

“Sealed spacetime...” Ning’s head hurt. In the Annihilation Hive, he had encountered countless spacetime bubbles which were linked together into a complicated formation that was used to devour energy from his Chaosverse! It didn’t have much of a bewildering or trapping effect, as that wasn’t its primary purpose. This one, however, existed solely for the purpose of trapping powerful foes.

“Then I’ll destroy spacetime here!” The three-headed, six-armed Ning sent six streams of sword-light flooding through the area, using his Spacetime Sword Dao to assault and destroy one spacetime bubble after another. Alas, the destroyed ones were quickly replaced by others.

“I can’t do it by force. I have to understand the mysteries behind this formation, then breach it.” Ning began to consider his next steps.

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The eight Sithe Exalts seated on the stone pillars all exchanged a glance. They could see and sense everything Ning was doing inside their formation.

“Anything involving Emperor Darknorth is extremely important. Report this to our superiors immediately,” one Exalt said.

“Alright.” A black-haired man nodded as he produced a silvery formation-base before him. This formation-base had a total of three loops above it which were slowly spinning in place. Gradually, a blurry pillar of light appeared within the loops which resolved into a humanoid figure. A second later, the blurry figure completely solidified into the tall, muscular, gray-robed Iyerre.

Iyerre was seated upon his throne, eyes closed in meditation. Only after fully manifesting did he open his eyes.

“Almighty Iyerre.” The black-haired man remained seated, but he still bowed downwards in respect.

“What is it?” Iyerre glanced down at the man from his throne.

“The eight of us have captured an Autarch-class combatant using the temple you gave us! We suspected that this person is the mysterious ‘seventh Autarch’, and so we first used illusions to test him out. He almost instantly defeated our illusions, and so we now believe that there is at least an 80% chance he is Emperor Darknorth,” the black-haired man said respectfully. “We know just how major this is, so we immediately decided to report it to you.”

“Emperor Darknorth?” Iyerre’s previously placid gaze suddenly shone with terrifying light. This was the variable which worried him above all others!

Iyerre had made many, many preparations for this war! The Sithe Hegemons and Emperors he had poured into the vanguard had been nothing more than cannon fodder. Iyerre didn’t feel the slightest bit of guilt over their deaths, because they had no impact at all. So long as they died killing native Hegemons and Emperors, it could be said that they had succeeded in their purpose! Only when he sent out the Sithe Exalts would the final battle have truly begun.

If it wasn’t for Emperor Darknorth, Iyerre was certain that he had over a 99% chance of success! This was why he hadn’t shown himself a single time. He was confident enough to continue lying in wait, biding his time. Once he did finally reveal himself, it would be in a way which shocked everyone.

However... Emperor Darknorth worried Iyerre. Someone who had failed the Daomerge and yet was able to devise a ‘Truesoul Everlasting’ technique before dying was undoubtedly a figure of absolutely unearthly talent! If Emperor Darknorth took that one final step, he would become an Omega Dao Autarch! Omega Autarchs in their own Chaosverses were absolutely invincible.

“An 80% chance it is him?” Iyerre murmured softly. “Good. Very good. My first target shall be him, then! Use everything you have to keep him trapped and wait for my arrival! I’ll head there at maximum speed and kill him myself.”

“You are coming in person?” The black-haired man was shocked. Iyerre had yet to personally take part ever since they had entered this Chaosverse and launched the war against the local cultivators. They all knew how powerful Iyerre was! Although he was unable to summon the power of the Dao in this Chaosverse and was rejected by it, he had prepared many trump cards for this war. Once he made his move, he would undoubtedly be able to kill this ‘Emperor Darknorth’.

“Understood. We’ll use every tool at our disposal to keep Emperor Darknorth contained,” the black-haired man said.

“Very well. I’m heading out right away.” The pillar of light began to vanish, and the last thing they saw was a fuzzy image of Iyerre rising from his throne.

Iyerre still wasn’t completely sure if the seventh native ‘Autarch’ was Emperor Darknorth or not. Even if it was someone else, killing a trapped Autarch wouldn’t be a complete waste of his time. If it really was Emperor Darknorth, things would be perfect!

Thus, to make sure that nothing unexpected might happen, Iyerre elected to personally deal with this new variable.

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Ning stared at the countless spacetime bubbles in the void. He was able to almost instantly tell that he wouldn’t be able to solve this formation right away, and so he quickly sent word to the other six.

“Gentlemen, I’ve also become trapped within a Sithe temple. Mine has eight Sithe Exalts controlling it,” Ning sent via the message-talisman. “I’m now trapped within a spacetime formation. It’ll take me some time to break out of it.”

“What?! Darknorth, you’ve been trapped as well?”

“Darknorth, I’m not too far away from you. I’ll come help out,” Autarch Stonerule replied immediately.

“No need. I’m quite skilled in both spacetime and formations. I’m better suited for dealing with this type of formation than anyone else,” Ning sent

back. “Don’t worry too much. I’m about to start meditating on how to deconstruct this formation. I’m just giving you all a head’s up! For both myself and Ekong to be trapped in short succession means that the Sithe have probably prepared squads of Exalts for all of us. Don’t let yourselves be trapped as well.”

“Alright.” The other six Autarchs all felt a sense of pressure. Ekong had been trapped in a temple commanded by seven Exalts, while Darknorth had been trapped by a grayish-white temple controlled by eight. The Sithe most assuredly had more Exalts under their command than simply fifteen!

Chapter 10: Eighty-Two Days

"Starting today... Skyfeeder, Mogg, Bolin, and Stonerule, the five of us must cease using our true bodies to hunt down Sithe warships," Autarch Titanos sent to the others. "The cultivators across the various battlefronts are no longer under too much pressure. That means the hunt for Sithe Hegemons is no longer as pressing as it was previously! Let's simply have our avatars engage in the hunt. Let's not send our true bodies."

"Right. Leave our true bodies in safety. Darknorth and Ekong have both been trapped; if two or three more of us are trapped, we might end up losing this war," Autarch Skyfeeder sent back.

"Darknorth, be careful," Mogg said.

"Solve it and escape as soon as you can. Too much time can result in new variables being introduced," Autarch Bolin said.

Everyone understood that the longer one was trapped for, the more dangerous it would be. Even if Ning was able to temporarily survive the grayish-white temple thanks to his formidable abilities, it was just a matter of time before the Sithe sent even more reinforcements to attack him! Thus, the more time they wasted the uglier the situation would become. He had to escape as quickly as possible.

"If there's anything you need us to do, just ask," Autarch Skyfeeder said. "Of the seven of us, your life matters more than anyone else's."

"I understand." Ning also understood that his fate no longer belonged to him alone; his death would have an impact on their entire Chaosverse and all the cultivators within it.

The white-robed Ning stared at the countless spacetime bubbles and the formation they had been arranged into. Spacetime continuously changed around him, and Ning simply watched while under the effects of 100x temporal acceleration. His every thought was focused on understanding how this grand spacetime formation actually worked.

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Riiiiip. A spacetime rift suddenly appeared deep within the Great Dark, followed by a tall, gray-robed, barefoot man walking into it. His eyes were warm and gentle, seemingly filled with love towards all living beings.

"Hmph." Iyerre stared into the void, letting out a slight snort as he frowned. A strange type of energy was circling around his body, preventing all forms of karma from touching him! This was the reason why no one from the local cultivator civilizations had ever been able to discover his existence, despite the passage of countless aeons. Given Iyerre's power, if the prime essences of the Chaosverse were able to sense him it would've immediately ranked him as the most terrifying threat in all of existence and have warned the Autarchs long ago.

"Ugh. I can't use even a sliver of the power of the Dao, and I'm constantly being suppressed. Even my travelling speed is slowed to a crawl," Iyerre murmured anxiously to himself. Given his power, back in his own Chaosverse he was able to travel more than a hundred times faster than right now. Even in the Infinite Void, he travelled much faster than he did right now. In this Chaosverse, however, he was being constantly suppressed to the point where he moved roughly as fast as the native Autarchs.

"It will take me eighty-two days to reach the place where we've trapped Emperor Darknorth." Cold light flashed through Iyerre's warm eyes. "I hope nothing happens during this period of time. We've used the 'Eight Revolutions Spacetime Temple' to trap Emperor Darknorth. He shouldn't be able to escape in such a short period of time."

He had been waiting back in the heart of the Sithelands, which was very far away from the place Ning was trapped. And yet, he would still be able to reach Ning in just a bit over two months, despite being unable to use any of the power of the Dao and being suppressed by this Chaosverse. This was a testament to how truly formidable he was!

"Emperor Darknorth is the only variable which is outside my control. If I can get rid of him, the six remaining Autarchs will pose no danger." Iyerre felt a tinge of worry. "He's the most unpredictable variable, and he's definitely in the highest of favor with the local Quintessence. The entire

Chaosverse will concentrate virtually all of its luck onto him! This is what allows him to create one miracle after another... but in the end, going from being an Omega Emperor to being an Omega Autarch will still be incredibly difficult. Luck and favor alone will not be enough."

In the end, karmic luck was just a form of external aid. It could be ridiculously helpful to ordinary mortals, allowing them (for example) to easily acquire various treasures which could allow them to become Immortals and understand the Dao. For Autarchs, however, luck was much less useful.

Autarch Titanos and the others didn't care too much about karmic luck either. It was almost impossible for them to improve any further, no matter how lucky they were! Ning, however, was the only person in this entire Chaosverse who stood a chance of becoming an Omega Autarch. He would definitely be blessed with tremendous luck, but luck alone wouldn't be enough to produce an Omega Autarch. It wasn't even enough to allow him to come up with a technique like the 'Truesoul Everlasting'; such a thing required many other factors, including personal insights and tremendous hard work!

Generally speaking, the more powerful you became the better your karmic luck would also become. When Ning had been reborn via the Netherworld Kingdom, he had been an unremarkable little fellow in the vast chaosworld that was the Three Realms. It was only once he grew stronger that his luck truly improved. Iyerre, in contrast, wished to suppress the entire Chaosverse and then bind it to him. To an expert like him, only personal strength was worth putting your faith in.

"He might be a variable, but he still has far less than even a 10% chance of breaking through to becoming an Omega Autarch. I still stand a very good chance of winning this war. Eighty-two days... so long as they can hold him for eighty-two days, I'll be able to make it in time and get rid of Emperor Darknorth." Iyerre had an ironclad will, but he still couldn't help but feel a bit of anxiousness. He knew that whether or not he was able to kill Emperor Darknorth was one of the biggest factors in determining if he could gain control over this Chaosverse or not.

Riiip. He continued to tear through spacetime, warping at Autarch-like speeds towards Ning's location.

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Within the Eight Revolutions Spacetime Temple. Ever since Ning had been trapped here, he had spent all of his time analyzing the complicated formation around him. He had no idea that a terrifying figure like Iyerre was heading towards him, but he did know the more time he wasted, the more dangerous the situation would become.

On the fifth day of Ning's imprisonment. Autarch Titanos and Autarch Ekong managed to break free of the hallway formation trapping them... but then, a new danger appeared before them.

On the ninth day of Ning's imprisonment. The two Autarchs very nearly escaped, but all of a sudden the most terrifying danger of all descended upon them.

On the tenth day of Ning's imprisonment. Autarch Titanos' avatar was forced to use his own life to block the dangerous attack crashing towards them, resulting in him dying in battle! However, this allowed Autarch Ekong to escape unharmed. He was heavily wounded, but at least he managed to stay alive.

"I could feel death breathing down my neck. I could literally feel death's icy grasp reaching for me! It was all thanks to you, Titanos. Otherwise, there's no way I would've been able to escape. Even if I did escape the first hallway, the second trap would've done me in." Autarch Ekong was extremely grateful. "I'm ashamed of having caused you to sacrifice an avatar."

"It's fine. I can make another one! For you to have escaped counts as a win in my book. Besides, it was my fault for being unable to fully divine all the dangers of that place," Titanos said.

"Haha! Ekong, Titanos just saved your life. After this war is over, you need to offer him some of that fine wine you've been stockpiling."

"No problem whatsoever," Ekong agreed straightforwardly.

Ekong's escape was something for the cultivators to celebrate. Of course, Titanos had to recreate an avatar, which would start off at 50% of his power at most. This avatar would now be the weakest of their Autarch-class combatants, which would have a negative impact on their total combat prowess, but it was still a much, much better outcome than Autarch Ekong dying.

Now, the only one trapped was Ning himself. Titanos, Skyfeeder, Mogg, and Bolin all offered advice and strategies based on what Ning had told them, and they also tried to help come up with ideas for solving the formation. Alas, they weren't able to see the formation in person and so they could do nothing more than give general advice.

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On the nineteenth day of Ning's imprisonment. Ning was still unable to escape, but something else happened. Autarch Bolin's avatar was also assaulted by a squad of Sithe Exalts. He had been very cautious, but he still ended up trapped within an evil black temple.

"The Sithe really do have more squads of Exalts roving around. Damn." Autarch Ekong was furious.

"Thankfully, only his avatar has been trapped there. If Bolin's real body was trapped, we'd be in much more trouble," Titanos said. "Bolin, hurry up and try to solve the formation and escape as soon as possible. Even if you can't escape, the sooner your avatar dies the sooner you can start working on a new one and making it stronger. Every extra day counts. Of course, I hope you can escape intact. That avatar is an Autarch-class combatant, after all."

If they were continuously weakened like this, they might end up being defeated in the final battle. Small losses of strength could have a major impact on the outcome of the war.

"Darknorth, you be careful as well. Staying alive matters more than anything else," Titanos said.

"Darknorth, my avatar's remained fairly close to you this entire time. It can probably reach you in around ten days or so. If you ever need my help,

just let me know," Autarch Mogg sent. "Your life is extremely important to us. If I can sacrifice an avatar to keep you alive, that's a worthwhile trade."

"No need. I'm still analyzing the formation trapping me. You coming in wouldn't really help me much. If I ever do need you, I'll let you know."

Ning felt quite grateful for the offer, but he knew that Autarch Mogg coming wouldn't make any difference.

Chapter 11: Breaching Spacetime, Succumbing to Eight Revolutions

Within the Eight Revolutions Spacetime Temple.

The Sithe Exalts remained seated on the eight stone pillars ringing the outer perimeter of the temple. They were closely watching all of Ji Ning's actions within the formation, not daring to be the slightest bit negligent. Thanks to their control over the formation they were able to scry and see Ning's white-robed figure seated in the lotus position, surrounded by countless divine runes of incomparable complexity.

"He's skilled in formations, illusions, spacetime..." A Sithe Exalt sighed in amazement. "Only an Omega Emperor could be skilled in so many aspects!"

As Sithe Exalts, they had the same level of insight as the native Autarchs of this Chaosverse. Thus, they were able to tell from the runes surrounding Ning that the man had reached incredible heights in both formations and spacetime.

"Emperor Darknorth lives up to his reputation. Still... it isn't likely that he'll be able to solve this formation in just eighty-two short days. Twenty days have already gone past."

"Perhaps the spacetime formation alone will be enough to trap him."

The Sithe Exalts were conversing mentally with each other. They knew just how important Emperor Darknorth was to the war. He was most likely the greatest obstacle to almighty Iyerre taking control over this Chaosverse! This was why Iyerre was hastening towards them at top speed. If they managed to successfully keep Emperor Darknorth trapped for eighty-two days, they would have carried out their primary mission. Once Iyerre became the Lord of Chaos for this Chaosverse, he would definitely give them great rewards.

Time continued to flow on, one day after another. The spacetime formation was indeed quite complicated, but on the thirtieth day of Ning's

imprisonment, an explosion suddenly erupted forth from within the formation, followed by the faces of the eight Sithe Exalts turning grim.

The white-robed Ning had risen to his feet. He had assumed his three-headed, six-armed form and was using his six Northbow swords to furiously assault the spacetime formation around him.

He seemed to be randomly hacking to the right and to the left, but somehow his ‘random’ hacks managed to disrupt the functioning of the entire formation. He had located and broken through some of the energy nexus points, causing the power of the formation to drop dramatically.

“He’s discovered the secrets behind our spacetime formation. The formation is going to break. It won’t hold much longer!” The eight Sithe Exalts were shocked by Ning’s speed.

Boom! The spacetime formation finally collapsed, followed by those countless miniature spacetime bubbles popping and dissipating.

After thirty full days, he had finally defeated the spacetime formation.

“Incredible. Simply incredible.” A black-haired Sithe Exalt sighed in amazement. “He was able to breach the formation in just thirty days. If I was trapped there, I probably wouldn’t be able to get out even if I spent a hundred chaos cycles trying.”

“You aren’t skilled in formations. You’d stand no chance whatsoever.”

“He really is impressive.”

“Thirty days have gone past. Only fifty-two days are left. The ‘eight revolutions formation’ should be able to trap him for fifty-two days, right?” a Sithe Exalt with golden fur covering his face said.

“The Eight Revolutions Spacetime Temple’s strongest trap-type formation is the ‘eight revolutions formation’; the spacetime formation isn’t quite as strong. When I tested the spacetime formation out, I was able to get an overall sense of what I needed to do and could calmly meditate on it, but when I tested out the eight revolutions formation I just felt completely baffled and lost,” a female Sithe Exalt said. “If it took him thirty days for just the spacetime formation, the eight revolutions

formation will probably take him over three years.”

“There’s no way he’s getting out of there.”

“Check out that stupid look on his face.”

“Haha, he wants to break through via raw force? What a joke!” The Sithe Exalts all began to laugh when they saw what Ning was doing. They knew just how powerful their ‘eight revolutions formation’ was.

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Boom! Ning had just broken through the vast spacetime formation. Now, he surveyed his new surroundings with a frown. He was within a sealed dimension of raw fire. The flames filled every inch of this dimension, but they were pushed aside before even getting close to Ning.

“A sealed dimension?” Ning had no idea that he had now entered the most dangerous and most difficult part of the Eight Revolutions Spacetime Temple... the eight revolutions formation! This would be his greatest obstacle to escaping the temple. If he managed to break through this, the temple wouldn’t have much else left.

“I should be able to just tear through dimensional membranes via raw force.” Ning didn’t hesitate at all, immediately using the technique which Autarchs favored the most – raw force!

Boom! Ning shot upwards while manifesting three heads and six arms. His six Northbow swords furiously chopped against the dimensional membrane, with each strike empowered by the mysteries of the Space Sword Dao. Ning unleashed several hundred chops just the blink of an eye!

When Ning had been trapped within that ‘hidden’ dimension, Autarch Mogg and Autarch Titanos had used the same principle to break through the dimensional membrane – raw force! This was because, unlike the Sithe, they had nigh-limitless amounts of energy here in their own Chaosverse. There was no worry about running out, whereas the Sithe had to consider how much energy they had available when planning their killer attacks.

Thus, using raw force to overpower a formation was actually a highly effective technique, even though it seemed rather brutish and clumsy!

"It seems like it is breaking." Ning could see that the dimensional membrane was shuddering in the face of his frenzied attacks.

In the spacetime maze, Ning had tried to furiously assault the spacetime bubbles in this manner as well. However, all of the spacetime bubbles he destroyed would release their energies to the local spacetime field, which would then give birth to new bubbles. As a result, the actual energy of the formation wasn't depleted in the slightest. Raw force was useless against a tactic like this, unless he reached a level where he was so strong he could tear apart the entire formation with just one strike of the sword.

Dimensional membranes, however, were different. They had to endure the weight of Ning's strikes head on, and each time that happened they would be depleted of energy. Eventually, they would be so weak that they would simply collapse!

Boom! After the time needed to boil a kettle of tea, one of Ning's strikes finally tore open a giant wound that was roughly three hundred meters in size. Through the tear in the dimensional membrane, Ning was able to see... a vast world of water outside.

"Eh?" Ning turned to stare at the world of fire he was currently in, then back at the world of water on the opposite side of the dimensional membrane. The rift in the membrane was already beginning to quickly heal.

"Another dimension?" Ning frowned, but he didn't hesitate in immediately charging through the rift and entering the world of water.

"That was fast. The dimensional rift closed after just three seconds." Ning watched as the tear he had created vanished before his very eyes.

"So this is a world of water, eh?" Ning flew through the water. The waves were powerful and heavy, but like the flames they were incapable of harming Ning in the slightest.

"I'll break through again." Ning once more used his sword-arts as he

flew to the edges of the world, then began to frenziedly assault the dimensional membrane. It once more took him the amount of time needed to boil a kettle of tea to once more tear a dimensional rift open... and this time, he was able to see a world that was filled with vitality and boundless green light.

"Yet another world?" Ning had a bad feeling about this, but he still flew through and continued to assault the dimensional membrane in this third world.

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And so, Ning began to enter and then furiously chop through one world after another without stopping. An ordinary person probably would've given up long ago, but Ning spent an entire day chopping through a hundred different dimensional membranes before stopping. Alas, there was no end to them.

"I've broken through over a hundred worlds in a row." Ning was standing atop a mountain, pondering to himself. "These hundred worlds seem to be constructed from eight dimensional archetypes. I can view them as the ice world, the water world, the life world, the earth world, the mountain world, the fire world, the lava world, and the metal world. The dimensions continuously fluctuate between these eight worlds..."

"There's only eight basic 'types', but each world I enter seems to have a slightly different aura than the previous ones." Ning was growing a bit nervous. He had spent an entire day analyzing the worlds, but still had no idea how he was supposed to break through them.

When he had been within the spacetime formation, at least he could tell that there were countless spacetime bubbles that were linked together into a formation. He was able to glean insights on the workings of the formation from those bubbles before finally solving it!

However, the 'eight revolutions formation' he was trapped in simply gave him a new world once he broke through the previous one. It was a never-ending cycle of these eight types of worlds, a cycle without end...

"How should I break through? How should I escape?" Ning continuously

pondered this.

“Can it be that there are actually only eight worlds in total? No, that can’t be right. I can sense through my mastery of spacetime that there should be more than just eight.” Ning simply had no idea as to how he was supposed to understand the mysteries behind this formation!

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Time continued to flow on one day after another. The Sithe Exalts on the eight stone pillars gradually began to relax. Everything was as they had predicted. The eight revolutions formation was much more difficult to break than the spacetime formation, after all. In truth, every single one of these temples was quite extraordinary. Autarch Ekong had only been able to escape his temple thanks to Autarch Titanos sacrificing his avatar.

“Once Iyerre gets here, we’ll have completed our mission.” The Sithe Exalts continued to wait silently.

As for Ning, he was now seated in the lotus position at the very center of a world of lava. Time was sped up to a rate of 100x around him as he continuously pondered the problem before him. Ning had already notified Titanos, Mogg, Skyfeeder, Bolin, and the others. All six Autarchs were helping him with suggestions, but none of them were able to come up with any true solutions for this deceptively simple cycle of eight worlds.

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RWX's Thoughts

THREE chapters today because I screwed something up on Patreon, which means +1 chapters for everyone. Le sigh... thankfully, our new advance chapters has fixed the issue!

Btw, the new VIP system is up! It'll give you nifty new features like ad-free viewing, and you'll also get credit which can be applied to participating novels (most eventually) as we in-house advance chapters. Cheers!

Chapter 12: A Murderous Voice

Oftentimes, the simpler something was the fewer flaws it had. One of the simplest measures was to just construct a dimensional cage to imprison someone, one which was so stable and tough that there was no way to break through it.

However, simplicity carried its own stringent requirements. Ji Ning and the Autarchs were so overwhelmingly powerful and had such limitless reserves of energy that no mere dimensional cage could possibly withstand their assaults! The eight revolutions formation went about it in another way. It generated multiple worlds, each of which Ning was able to break through fairly quickly... but the worlds continued to be generated one after another!

"All of these worlds are extremely stable. Maintaining this sort of world can't be easy," Ning mused. "And there can't really be an endless amount of worlds!"

"Break!" Ning once more rose to his feet in three-headed, six-armed form. He transformed into a dazzling streak of sword-light which slammed against the dimensional membrane. After the time needed to boil a kettle of tea the dimensional membrane was hacked open, revealing a freezing world of ice. Ice filled the entire world, making up its continents, mountains, and valleys.

Ning stepped through the dimensional rift and into this frozen world.

"It doesn't really matter which direction the tear is created in; the end result will still be a new world. Given how stable these worlds are, there can't be that many of them... and yet they continue to loop in on themselves in an endless cycle. The only way this is possible is if these eight worlds are actually moving to line up in front of me! That way, no matter where I go I'll see an endless procession of worlds before me."

By now, Ning had a rough idea as to how this eight cycles formation had to work. It consisted of several dozen or several hundred worlds that were perhaps arranged into a spherical shape! Ning was located at the very

center of this sphere, so no matter where he went he would enter a new world. Once he did so, the other worlds would relocate themselves to keep him at their center.

No matter where he went, he would remain trapped in the ‘center’ of the formation. He’d never be able to make it out!

This was his current theory. Perhaps it wasn’t perfect, but he felt confident that this was more-or-less how it worked. However, this theory just made Ning feel even more worried, precisely because of how simple it was. The simpler something was, the fewer flaws it would have.

“Its only real flaw is that these worlds have to constantly move and shift around as I do. If they didn’t, then I would eventually be able to advance beyond the scope of the formation. This moving process has to take time. It takes me the time needed to boil a kettle of tea in order to break through a world, and that’s more than enough for them to readjust themselves,” Ning mused. “If I could break through the worlds over ten times faster... perhaps it wouldn’t be enough time for the worlds to relocate themselves perfectly, resulting in some openings that I can exploit.”

Based on his current level of understanding, he knew that using force to breach this formation was completely hopeless. The eight formations formation would continuously rearrange its internal configuration with each world he escaped. Power wouldn’t work... what he needed was speed! He needed to move fast enough that the formation wouldn’t be able to reconfigure in time, resulting in flaws being revealed.

“This is my only option.” Ning could come up with no ideas save for this one. “But how am I supposed to break through these worlds faster?”

Two options came to mind. The first was to somehow make himself become more powerful. For example, if he managed to reach a greater level of understanding with regards to the Dao of Spacetime, he would be able to quickly and more easily breach those dimensional walls. Alternately, if he managed to create the Oblivion Sword Dao then he could use its all-encompassing destructive force to devour everything in his

path. Ning had the feeling that once he created it, he would become much more powerful, and he could use that power to more quickly breach those dimensional barriers.

However, improving his personal strength was an extremely difficult goal. He had already devised the Spacetime Sword Dao. Ning had no idea how he was supposed to upgrade it any further.

The concept of ‘Oblivion’, he had only gained after scrying the secrets of the sphere of annihilation. This was a form of power that was capable of destroying an entire Chaosverse. Iyerre had found this mysterious item from within the Infinite Void, and in all his countless aeons of existence he had never found a second such item. Ning’s avatar remained trapped within the Annihilation Hive, and it had never stopped analyzing this technique.

The second option was to find flaws in the dimensional membranes before him. If he could find some flaws, he would be able to break through them much faster with much less effort.

“I’ve been constantly training in the Oblivion Sword Dao. There’s no way to rush it.” Ning inspected the area around him. “My only choice is to find flaws within these dimensional constructs.”

Whoosh. Whoosh. His sword-light became watery, flowing across the dimensional membrane and causing it to first shudder, then crack.

Ning stared at the cracks, watching them quickly heal. “These dimensions were created based on the secrets of spacetime. Every single part of the dimensional membrane seems to be identical. There don’t seem to be any flaws.”

.....

As Ning remained trapped within the eight revolutions formation, the war outside began to pick up the pace. Autarch Skyfeeder’s avatar ended up being tricked while hunting down Sithe and was trapped within a temple, as was Autarch Bolin’s avatar.

Autarch Stonerule’s avatar was more formidable. He was a wary man

and a mastery of illusions. When the Sithe temple appeared, they discovered that they had trapped nothing more than a mere projection... and now that the temple had revealed itself, Autarch Stonerule immediately set down a grand formation around the temple, securely sealing it away and ensuring that it was unable to escape.

For now the clashes remained fairly low-level, as Autarchs could replace lost avatars with slightly weaker ones. In the end, the real focus of the war remained on Emperor Darknorth.

If Emperor Darknorth died, the Annihilation Hive would no longer be checked. It would continue to furiously devour the energies of the Chaosverse. The only other person who understood how the reverse-vortex formation worked was Autarch Titanos, whose avatar had already been destroyed. His new avatar wasn't strong enough to keep the Annihilation Hive in check. Titanos would have to go in person if he wanted to stop the thing!

Darknorth was the strongest member of the seven cultivator leaders, while Titanos was the second-strongest. If the former was slain while the latter was tied down, they would have all-but lost the war.

"If we can kill Darknorth, we'll have won." Iyerre viewed killing Ning as a mission of critical importance. As far as he was concerned, Ning was a greater risk than all six of the other Autarchs combined.

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On the sixty-ninth day of Ning's capture.

In recent days Ning would only occasionally break through to a new world, then spend most of his time strolling about before beginning to meditate.

"Ah. So is that how it works?" Ning opened his eyes, his gaze as deep and fathomless as the starry skies themselves. Countless stars seemed to be swimming through his eyes. This was a sign that he had reached a truly incredible level in the Dao of Numerancy.

Suddenly, Ning's body rapidly increased in size. Boom! He transformed

into a towering three-headed, six-armed giant who wielded all six of the Northbow swords. He strode across the land, his six swords also increasing in size as he used them to deliver repeated chops of sword-light against the dimensional membrane all around him.

When Ning's swords moved, multiple sword-shadows appeared around them. There were chops, stabs, thwacks... all sorts of attacks filled the area around him.

"What's going on?"

"Something's wrong with that world. It's destabilizing!" The Sithe Exalts responsible for maintaining the eight revolutions formation were quickly shocked. They had only grown more confident in their formation as they had watched Ning fail to make any progress. They had allowed themselves to relax... but now, all of them were shocked! This was because the world Ning was in had begin to shudder, almost as though the entire world was unable to remain stable and was at the verge of collapse.

"I can't send in additional energy!" the black-haired Sithe Exalt called out in shock. "We're blocked from sending our energy into any part of the dimensional membrane of that world. Something's disrupting the conduits! The lack of energy is causing the dimensional membrane to be unable to repair itself. He's going to break through much faster than before!"

"How is this possible? How did he do this?!" The Sithe Exalts were frantic. Previously, Ning needed the amount of time for boiling a kettle of tea in order to break through a dimensional membrane. This was because each time he assaulted the dimensional membrane, the formation would quickly send in more energy to reinforce it. This was why even after he did manage to tear a rift open, the rift would quickly close after just three seconds.

But now, the dimensional membrane was no longer being resupplied with energy. That made the destruction process much faster.

It didn't make sense. The energy transfer was an invisible, formless process which saw energy be directed straight into the membrane itself.

By all rights, there should be no way to stop such a thing. However, to a person who had reached a sufficiently high level of insights all things were possible, be it creation or destruction. Ning had spent many days in accelerated meditation, figuring out a way to accomplish this by joining together his Numerancy Sword Dao, Spacetime Sword Dao, Light Sword Dao, and Dark Sword Dao.

Boom! Three gaping holes appeared in different parts of the world Ning was trapped in. Ning glanced through the holes, only to see three completely different worlds. He smiled.

"Dimensions, revolve!" a strange, murderous voice suddenly rang out.

Suddenly, Ning saw the three different worlds outside the rifts begin to spin away. The world he was in became completely detached from them... and slowly, Ning began to see the fourth and fifth worlds which were revolving around him.

Chapter 13: Fatal Trap (Part 1)

"Not good." A terrifying sense of danger instantly flooded Ji Ning's mind. "They can no longer hold me, so they are going to try and kill me instead?"

These temples were all manned by Sithe Exalts. They could be used to trap, but they could also be used to kill! Autarch Titanos' avatar and Autarch Ekong had to work together to survive the one they were in, with Titanos eventually losing his avatar in order for Ekong to escape. These temples were not easy to deal with!

Ning had the vague feeling that staying within this world would be even more dangerous, and so he immediately transformed into a streak of light and shot outwards.

Whoosh! As soon as he exited the world, his face paled. In the past a new world would greet him once he exited the previous one, but this time was different. This time, he was within an empty region which had many enormous pocket dimensions. Above him, below him, to his left, to his right... the entire area was filled with those spinning worlds. Ning was able to see over twenty of the things. They all circled around him, with him being at the very center.

"It really is as I had predicted. These worlds are all mobile, which is why I would always enter a new one after breaking through the old one." Ning became all the more certain of his hypothesis when he saw this. "Now that I'm breaking through the worlds much more quickly, they aren't able to keep up and so they've chosen to discard the useless trappings entirely."

"Emperor Darknorth!" a cold voice rang out.

"Are you absolutely sure that I'm Darknorth?" Ning replied, relaxed. His body was glowing with such radiance that the Sithe Exalts were only able to see a glowing figure and were unable to make out his features.

"I can't imagine anyone save you, Emperor Darknorth, who would be able to so quickly understand and deconstruct the eight revolutions formation," the cold voice replied. "The eight revolutions formation isn't just meant for trapping people, it's also filled with many killer

mechanisms! Emperor Darknorth, our original plan was simply to trap you. However, you are forcing our hand. We'll have to kill you now," a second deep voice boomed out.

"Hah!" Ning stared at the many worlds revolving around him, then let out a loud laugh. "What a joke! If you were able to kill me, you would've done so long ago. In the end, this is my homeland. We cultivators are far more powerful than you in our own Chaosverse. Kill me? Even if you have the assistance of this temple, I'll wager you aren't sure of your chances!"

The faces of the eight Sithe Exalt stiffened slightly. It was true. They had to admit that they weren't 100% sure they could kill Darknorth. Not even Iyerre was confident that they could accomplish this, which was why he had merely ordered them to trap Ning and tie him down. If they could keep Ning trapped until Iyerre arrived, their chances of victory would increase to 100%! Alas, there was nothing the Sithe Exalts could do. Now that Ning had already worked out how the eight revolutions formation operated, he would probably be able to escape within an hour if left to his own devices!

Thus, they had chosen to transform the 'eight revolutions formation' from a trapping formation to a killing formation.

All of the temples had terrifying offensive powers built into them. The same was true for the Eight Revolutions Spacetime Temple!

"Hopefully, we can kill him. Even if we cannot, we can still use 'annihilation mode' to buy ourselves some more time."

"It's already been sixty-nine days. If we can buy another ten-plus days, we'll have accomplished something great."

"He's forcing us to do this. Attack!"

"Attack!" The eight Sithe Exalts immediately activated the offensive functions in the eight revolutions formation.

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"Eh?" Ning's face hardened as he stood there in the empty void, staring at the vast worlds which were spinning around him. He could clearly sense

that each of the giant worlds were accumulating and preparing to unleash a terrifying amount of power. Freezing energies, flaming energies, watery energies, vital energies, metallic energies... all types of energies were beginning to pour out of the many worlds.

The different types of energy were beginning to build together, and in the end they resolved into eight different types of energy which materialized in the forms of titanic dragons. The vast energy dragons all looked completely different, but they were all around ten million kilometers long and a million kilometers wide. Each energy dragon contained enough power to cause even Ning to feel a sense of shock. These things were definitely on the Autarch level... and in fact, they significantly surpassed Ning in raw might.

However, Ning was able to remain quite calm. These were nothing more than formation constructs which did not possess true sentience. They knew nothing of the Dao.

The eight enormous dragons slowly began to ‘swim’ through the air towards Ning, their ponderous bodies blocking out everything in Ning’s vision.

“Hm.” Ning maintained his three-headed, six-armed form and warily waited for them with his six Northbow swords at the ready.

Finally, all of them joined together to form a series of loops. Some of them formed the ‘inner loops’, while others formed the ‘outer loops’. A dragon that seemed to be formed from stone energies was the first to move towards Ning, and when it did Ning finally struck.

“Break!” Faced with the durable-looking stone dragon, Ning immediately used the Five Elements Sword Dao. In truth, all eight energy dragons were based upon the energies of the Five Elements, and so the Five Elements Sword Dao was the most suitable response for all of them.

Ning’s sword-light was filled with vitality. It drilled hard against the stone dragon, exploding with dazzling light as it sought to tear through it.

The Five Elements Sword Dao truly was a strong counter for this stone dragon, but Ning’s full-force strike was only able to just barely shatter the

stone dragon apart. Moments later, the other energy dragons began to swarm towards him while the stone dragon began to reform from its shattered parts.

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. The eight energy dragons continuously coiled around Ning in layers. Ning destroyed one after another, but new ones were continuously formed.

"How long is this going to take?" Ning was growing anxious. "Why is it that I feel escape is even more difficult than it was earlier."

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The eight Sithe Exalts continued to maintain careful control over the formation, not daring to relax in the slightest.

"Using the formation like this is consuming far too much energy. It is depleting energy many times faster than 'trap mode' did. We won't be able to last too long," the black-haired Sithe exalts said worriedly.

"We have to. Even if it costs us every last scrap of energy, we have to last until almighty Iyerre arrives."

"Hold on for as long as you can."

The eight revolutions formation had many different mechanisms within it. 'Trap mode' was just the start, ensuring that any foe would find it difficult to escape. Next would come a terrifying number of attacks! However, the Sithe Exalts weren't confident in being able to actually kill Ning with those attacks, and so they continued to pour all of their efforts into simply trapping Ning and keeping him tied down. So long as Ning didn't escape, they would have 'won'... but this process would consume an enormous amount of energy, especially with Ning launching so many attacks against them.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The three-headed, six-armed Ning continuously assaulted the energy dragons using his Five Elements Sword Dao. He didn't pause for even a second, because he already discovered a flaw in the formation. "These dragons are formed from energy and given physical heft, making breaking them difficult. Without a doubt, maintaining them

takes up an absolutely shocking amount of energy at all times. If I furiously attack, their energy expenditures will be insane!”

“I refuse to believe they’ll be able to sustain such high levels of energy expenditure for too long. That’s the weak spot of this formation – its energy consumption. Break!” Ning didn’t worry about his own energy running dry. He was an Omega Emperor in his own Chaosverse; he had an endless supply of energy from the Chaosverse itself.

Boom! Boom! Boom! He destroyed yet another dragon, and once again a new dragon came in its stead. The eight energy dragons continued to coil around him and suppress him, preventing him from escaping but paying an enormous cost in energy to accomplish this.

After six full days of this war of attrition, the Sithe Exalts were finally unable to maintain it any longer.

“If this continues, in just one day our Eight Revolutions Spacetime Palace will collapse under its own weight due to lack of energy.” The female Sithe Exalt said hurriedly, “Even if we can manage to last for an extra day, it won’t be enough time. Iyerre won’t be able to make it.”

“Damn this Emperor Darknorth. He’s been attacking nonstop this entire time. If he took a slight break, we wouldn’t have it this rough. By all rights, we’ve prepared such a powerful energy wellspring that it should be more than strong enough to last us until almighty Iyerre arrives, but Emperor Darknorth won’t stop his crazed attacks!”

“Well, we ARE trying to kill him. You didn’t really expect him to just stand there and wait for death, did he?”

“Enough. Let’s attack. Cancel ‘trap mode’ and activate the ‘annihilation mode’! Annihilation mode has much more powerful attacks. Emperor Darknorth might be an incredible genius, but he still might very well die to it.”

“We’re out of other options.”

The Sithe Exalts had been trying to buy enough time for Iyerre to arrive, since that would guarantee them victory. Alas, they no longer had enough

time. Their only choice was to fully activate ‘annihilation mode’, with the original ‘trap mode’ having been nothing more than the first phase of the formation.

“Materialize!” The eight Sithe Exalts simultaneously began to activate their respective parts of the formation.

Rumble... the energy dragons that had been coiling around Ning suddenly began to roil about in midair, tangling around each other as all of them simultaneously shot towards Ning. Even the enormous linked worlds off in the distance began to move once more, causing Ning’s face to change.

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RWX's Thoughts

Here are your final two chapters of the week! We're getting so close to the end...

Chapter 14: Fatal Trap (Part 2)

The ‘trap mode’ had worked in a gradual function by pressuring Ji Ning and slowing him down. Each time he destroyed one of the eight energy dragons, it would quickly reform and go after him again. The overall tempo of the battle was fairly slow... but now, everything suddenly sped up.

The eight energy dragons began to simultaneously coil around Ning in a ferocious fashion. Ning knew just how terrifyingly strong these dragons were. If he wasn’t able to withstand their attacks, he would probably be ground to dust! Even his truesoul would be ground apart by them.

“Break!” Ning chose to discard all defenses and instead use his sword-arts to charge straight towards the ice dragon which was closest to him.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Sword-light flashed like the spokes of a giant windmill, instantly landing multiple consecutive cuts upon the frozen dragon’s body and chopping deep into it. Ning seized this opportunity to burrow all the way inside the dragon.

Bang! All the other energy dragons collided into each other, not even touching Ning who was now inside the ice dragon.

“Whew.” Ning let out a sigh of relief. “There’s no way for me to block all eight of those dragons head-on at once, but by hiding inside one of them I was able to sidestep the problem.”

Whoosh. The ice dragon Ning was inside of quickly began to crumble and break apart, taking away Ning’s ‘hiding spot’. A moment later, a new ice dragon began to reform at the outer perimeter of this region.

As soon as Ning revealed himself, all of the dragons once more swept towards him.

“Break!” Ning’s sword-light flashed with incomparable sharpness and severity, tearing through the body of the water dragon and allowing him to dodge inside!

No matter what dragon he faced, he was able to find the perfect sword-

art to counter it. He would burrow deep inside an energy dragon's body, using it to avoid the many other attacks!

"Hmph. I wonder how long you'll be able to keep playing like this." Ning wasn't worried at all, continuing to dive into the bodies of the energy dragons to avoid their combined attacks. "This increased tempo means that the energy dragons are breaking apart ten times faster than they were in the past, with the overall formation expending far more energy than merely ten times that of before! How long could they possibly sustain this?" Generally speaking, when accelerating the attacks of a formation like this, the energy expenditure would skyrocket an astronomical amount.

Ning's guess was spot-on. After just one hour, the Sithe Exalts were no longer able to maintain this tempo of battle.

"We aren't able to kill him. Emperor Darknorth is just too strong; he can almost instantly tear through one of our formation-dragons."

"Our energy reserves just don't last long enough. Let's go to the final formation, the 'eight revolutions annihilator' formation.

"I hope the 'eight revolutions annihilator' is able to kill him.

"It definitely will kill him. The eight revolutions annihilator is so powerful that it should definitely be mighty enough take his life."

The Sithe Exalts were all desperate for victory. The eight revolutions annihilator formation was the final and most powerful offensive technique the temple possessed. If even this failed, then Ning would be able to break the formation and escape shortly afterwards, which meant that they would have failed in their mission!

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As Ning was busy blocking those frenzied attacks, the eight energy dragons suddenly skyrocketed in power once more. They blasted out countless streams of power in every direction, aiming them at the giant worlds which were constantly shifting position in the perimeter around Ning. The worlds of water, freezing ice, blazing fire, stone, and more began to link together in an intricate and marvelous manner, forming a single

complete whole.

Above Ning, the many worlds had come together to form something which looked like an enormous Eight Trigrams shape. Below him, the many worlds had come together to form something similar.

The two sets of Eight Trigrams were rapidly crashing down towards Ning, who was trapped between them. It was like the lower set was a grindstone, while the upper set was a millstone!

All of the worlds surrounding Ning had been completely joined together, giving him no chance to escape at all. As for the energy dragons, their energies had been completely merged into this formation as well.

“Not good!” This was a straightforward crushing attack, spread across such a vast area that Ning wasn’t able to dodge it at all. His only choice was to meet it head-on. Ning knew that the most critical moment had come, and he readied his six Northbow swords while maintaining his three-headed, six-armed mode.

This all took time to describe, but in truth it took less than a heartbeat for these worlds to come crashing down towards Ning. They moved at an absolutely astonishing speed!

Clang! Ning used his own sword-arts to defend. Three of the Northbow swords executed the Numerancy Sword Dao. The Numerancy Sword Dao was so incomparably intricate that it could truly be described as peerless amongst all divination Daos! This formation-attack he was facing was divided into two parts, and Ning wanted to attempt to redirect some of their power against each other. Thus, he used the Numerancy Sword Dao to do just that, lessening some of the pressure off him.

His fourth Northbow sword, he used to execute the Spacetime Sword Dao in generating a spacetime membrane which covered him. He was now within an independent spacetime continuum which would easily deflect many attacks.

As for his final two swords, he used them to execute the Five Elements Sword Dao. They embodied the gentleness of water, the weightiness of the earth, the vital energy of wood...

The two Eight Trigrams formations continued to come crashing down towards each other. Iyerre had called this ‘annihilation mode’, and it used eight different sources of power to create a single source of overwhelming power.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Ning began to fight back against the two Eight Trigrams crashing towards him. He once more was like Pangu cleaving apart Heaven from Earth, using all six of his Northbow swords to resist the crushing pressure of this formation! However, Ning quickly sensed that yet another source of mighty power was crushing towards him. This caught Ning off-guard, and he hurriedly moved to block this one as well. And yet, moments later another source of power was crashing against him...

The Eight Trigrams were crashing towards him but were also swiveling, which generated a strange type of power that clashed against Ning, making it even harder for him to defend.

Bang! After defending against the fifth surge of power, Ning could feel his entire body trembling. Some blood came spewing out from his mouth.

“Not good.” Ning knew that his body was starting to break down under the stress. It was formed from the power of mana and was as strong as any Universe treasure, but it still wasn’t able to take this level of pressure.

Ning instantly transformed his body into a form of blurry sword-light. This was his invulnerable swordform!

Autarch Ekong, when faced with grave danger, had been forced to use his own invulnerable form. Now, Ning was forced to do the same. His body was no longer corporeal, making it incredibly resistant to any attacks. As the master of the Eternal Omega Sword Dao, Ning was most skilled in the invulnerable swordform. His body was now formed from countless streaks of sword-light which dispersed the crushing power pressing against him.

Even though he was now incorporeal, his six arms continued to wield the Northbow swords in fighting back against the attacks crashing against him.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Three more surges of power came crashing against

him. This power, the power of the ‘eight revolutions’, came in a total of eight waves. Ning’s blurry body of sword-light was able to deflect the majority of it, with the remaining power within the limits of what he could tolerate. However, his energy was now being depleted at such a rapid pace that for the first time in many years, Ning began to feel as though he wasn’t able to keep it up for much longer. During his previous fights, he had been able to instantly replenish as much as he used up. He had never felt as though he didn’t have enough energy!

This was simply because the amount of energy he was using to restore and repair his body was simply too enormous.

After all eight ‘waves’ of destructive energy were finished, the attacks paused for a brief moment before launching yet another eight waves... but that brief pause was enough for Ning to completely recover all of his energy.

“Hah! This formation of yours is useless against me.” Ning roared with laughter.

After he endured just three more cycles of annihilation mode... boom! The dimensional membrane pressing down on Ning from above in the form of the Eight Trigrams suddenly collapsed. It was unable to endure it any longer!

It must be remembered that the ‘crushing’ process was carried out by the dimensional membranes of the various worlds. The dimensional membranes were very tough, with Ning needing to attack for the time needed to boil a kettle of tea in order to destroy them, but the power of the ‘annihilation mode’ simply placed too much strain upon them, far more strain than Ning himself had to endure. Ning had been focusing on defending and redirecting its power away while using his invulnerable swordform to absorb the rest.

The great pressure needed to destroy Ning caused the dimensional membranes to be put under such great stress that they collapsed after a short period of time.

This could technically be considered a flaw, but it wasn’t really. This was

because if three consecutive attack cycles of the ‘eight revolutions annihilation’ was insufficient to kill an opponent, it meant that the formation itself just wasn’t strong enough. It had failed.

As soon as the formation above him shattered, Ning immediately charged upwards to escape. “Break!” Ning immediately used his sword-arts to slash upwards. He had long ago discovered where the weak points in the dimensional membranes were, and just six seconds later he exploded past them. The various worlds outside were still trying to rearrange themselves; clearly, they hadn’t formed a perfect seal yet.

Swoosh! Ning transformed into a streak of light, shooting through the seams that still existed between the moving worlds.

“Stop him!”

“Quick!”

“We’ve already converted all of the worlds into ‘annihilation mode’. It’ll take time for us to switch back into ‘trap mode’. We won’t make it!” The Sithe Exalts were panicking.

Ji Ning was simply too fast. He wasn’t going to just stand there as a fool and wait for them to reform the ‘trap mode’ and imprison him once more... and in truth, given his power he would be able to break through in just an hour.

The ‘annihilation mode’ had been very dangerous, but after breaching through two worlds Ning was on the road to escape.

Boom! After blasting through one final dimensional membrane, the entire world seemed to change before him. He had already reached the outsides of that vast temple, and he could even see the endless Great Dark outside as well.

He had escaped.

Swoosh! Ning transformed into a streak of light, soaring into the skies. He immediately saw the Sithe Exalts seated atop those distant stone pillars, their faces filled with looks of terror.

“None of you will escape!” Ning’s murderous voice boomed throughout every inch of the temple.

Chapter 15: Extermination

The Sithe Exalts could sense Ji Ning's murderous intentions. None of them hesitated as they all immediately transformed into streaks of light, charging inside the formation. The difference in power between them and Ning was simply too great. They had no chance at all of winning a frontal clash; their only chance was to hide within the formation!

"Heartworld projection, descend! Sword Dao domain, manifest!" Ning instantly used all of his most powerful domain-type techniques, sending both his heartworld projection and his sword domain crashing down upon them. The Sithe Exalts felt as though they were swimming through molasses as their flying speeds dropped dramatically. They were very close to the formation and should've been able to enter it in the blink of an eye, but they were now moving a thousand times slower than before.

"Hurry up and run! Hurry!" the Sithe Exalts continued to do their best to escape.

"Good luck, everyone. There's no way he can kill all eight of us at once." The Sithe Exalts were quickly able to judge the situation. The eight of them were scattered in eight different directions around the vast temple! They were all physically flying towards the center of the temple because spacetime in the area had been suppressed, making warping through it impossible. Ning was very fast, but the eight Sithe Exalts were all very close to the formation. They'd be able to enter it soon, and Ning wouldn't be able to kill all of them before the rest made it inside.

"Die." Ning instantly charged towards the closest Sithe Exalt, a female whose eyes were filled with terror.

"Don't kill me!" the female Exalt screamed, her voice filled with a strange cadence that tried to seep into Ning's soul and truesoul. This was an illusory technique!

"Playing around with illusions in front of me?" Ning smiled coldly. When he had been in the failed Daomerge state, his cracked truesoul might've been weak enough to partially succumb to such a technique... but now

that he had succeeded? His truesoul was far more powerful than ever before, and he had also gained a high level of mastery over the Dao of Illusions. How could this Sithe Exalt possibly shake him?

“Die.” Sword-light howled past him in the form of countless dimensional blades. Ning knew that these Sithe Exalts all had such powerful bodies that one or two blows probably wouldn’t be enough to kill him, and so he unleashed all six Northbow swords in a windmill of rapidfire attacks. Given Ning’s power, twenty strikes was all that was needed to completely annihilate her! Ning then began to fly towards the other Sithe Exalt close by.

“N-no...” The fiery-armored Sithe Exalt had a look of despair and resentment in his eyes as he stared at the eight revolutions formation in front of him. It was just inches away, but Darknorth’s terrifying domain pressed down upon him with such might that he was only able to fly very, very slowly.

Ning, in contrast, was able to fly at maximum speed. He arrived in just a moment, and his terrifying sword-light descended as well. Once again the most terrifying offensive Dao in all the Chaosverse, the Eternal Omega Sword Dao, revealed its deadly brilliance. Strengthened by Ning’s perfect mana, it had only become even more powerful than the past. This Sithe Exalt was tougher than the previous one, but it still only took Ning a total of twenty-six strikes to slay him.

Ning turned his gaze towards a bald and muscular Sithe Exalt off in the distance. That Sithe Exalt instantly started to panic. “Run, everyone! Run!”

Whoosh! Ning quickly sped towards the man. Slash! His sword-light hammered the Sithe Exalt from afar, and the heavily-wounded Exalt just barely survived it and charged into the formation. By now, the other five had all entered the formation as well.

“Thank goodness we made it inside.” The six lucky survivors all felt a sense of fear wrack their hearts. The Exalts glanced at each other, their eyes filled with joy at having survived. That had been utterly terrifying! They were supposed to be Autarchs, but here in this Chaosverse they had

been weakened so dramatically that they were at most comparable to the Blazesun Ruler in power. This was the natural disadvantage all invaders faced – they would be suppressed and prevented from using even a wisp of the Dao's power.

"He won't be able to break through the formation so easily. We're safe inside here."

"For now, we're saved."

"We did our best, but we weren't able to carry out Iyerre's orders," the Sithe Exalts said to each other.

"Look over there!" the black-haired Sithe Exalt suddenly cried out fearfully.

Two of them had perished, but the six of them were still more-or-less in control over the entire temple and were able to keep the eight revolutions formation active. Their control over the formation allowed them to clearly see what was happening outside... and they saw Ning transform to become absolutely towering in size, on par with the entire temple itself.

The titanic Ning was now far larger than many chaos planets. He was in three-headed, six-armed form, and his six Northbow swords had increased in size to match.

"DIE!" the titanic Ning roared furiously, sending his six gargantuan Northbow swords descending like the punishment of the heavens towards the formation protecting the temple.

After being lucky enough to escape once, Ning wasn't going to be so foolish as to dive back inside! However, he wasn't going to let the Sithe off either.

As far as the other Autarchs, Autarch Titanos had been forced to sacrifice an avatar to allow Autarch Ekong to escape, and Ekong himself suffered heavy injuries; he was in no condition to keep tussling against the Sithe Exalts. Autarch Stonerule had merely used his avatar to set up a few formations to seal that temple away, making it impossible for them to escape. Autarch Stonerule didn't dare to use his avatar to actually enter

the temple and fight them there.

Ning was the only exception. He had enough power to continue fighting against and killing these Sithe Exalts! This was because he was actually capable of defeating even the most powerful formations they had thrown at him.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Ning sent the six colossal Northbow swords crashing down with all his power. The outermost dimension protecting the eight revolutions formation was destroyed in just three seconds, but the formation quickly began to regenerate and rebuild the destroyed dimension.

"Not good. He already knows how to solve the eight revolutions formation, and there are only six of us left. It's hard for just six of us to keep the entire thing active. The formation is going to be much less stable than before!"

"Hold on for as long as we can!"

"Keep it stable, men!"

"The eight revolutions formation has many different worlds within it. It will take him time to destroy them one-by-one, while the six of us can continue to remake new ones. After attacking for a while, Emperor Darknorth will probably give up." The Sithe Exalts clung onto this faint hope as they struggled to defend.

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There was no way Ning would spare them. He continued to use all of his power to furiously assail the formation with his six Northbow swords, destroying one world after another. New worlds were quickly reborn, but this was costing the Sithe an enormous amount of energy!

A short while later, a figure flew over towards Ning from afar. This was Autarch Mogg's avatar.

"Darknorth." Autarch Mogg's avatar had actually arrived long ago, but he hadn't dared to intervene by going inside.

“Haha, Mogg! Perfect timing,” Ning laughed. “Give me a hand. It doesn’t matter what techniques you use, just hammer away at the formation with all your power.”

“Sure.” Autarch Mogg’s body transformed to become absolutely towering in size, and he manifested a total of six arms as well, each of which wielded a long and slender saber. He began to furiously assail the temple’s formation alongside Ning! Ning understood the flaws within the worlds and so his attacks had already put the formation under incredible stress. Now that another Autarch-class combatant had joined him, the stress was further amplified. The worlds began to crumble even faster than before.

Now, a world was crumbling every two seconds. One world after another shattered before their blows...

“We’re almost at the point where we can’t keep up with how fast they break our worlds.”

“Our energy stores are almost gone.” The Sithe Exalts were filled with despair. If they were at full power, they could at least use the spacetime formation or other formations to protect themselves once the eight revolutions formation broke apart, but they had virtually exhausted their energy stores in their attempts to first trap and then kill Ning. Now, Ning and Mogg were forcing them to use up their final bits of energy.

“We’re finished.” Their faces were filled with despair.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The final worlds were broken apart, causing the six Sithe Exalts to abandon all hope. As the remnants of the eight revolutions formation began to crumble, they shared a final glance.

“If almighty Iyerre succeeds, those of us who died in battle might have a chance to be revived.”

Boom! Boom! Boom! A series of explosions rang out, followed by the complete collapse of the remnants of the eight revolutions formation, which now lacked any controllers.

“Self-detonation?” Mogg’s avatar gritted its teeth. “Why are the Sithe so loyal? None of the Sithe Exalts we captured and tortured after the last war

have surrendered either."

"Destroying one of their temples counts as a victory in my book," Ning said. He waved his hand, drawing the remnants of the temple into his own estate-world. "Let's go."

"Let's leave." Mogg nodded. Riiip! The two tore through spacetime and left side-by-side.

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Iyerre was still flying through the Great Dark at maximum speed. He looked calm, but flames could be seen flickering deep within his eyes. He was eagerly looking forward to the moment where he could kill Emperor Darknorth. By killing Emperor Darknorth, his victory over this war would be secured!

Whoosh. The barefoot Iyerre came to a sudden halt within the empty darkness of space... He stared off into the distance. He could sense the deaths of each and every Sithe Exalt under his command, and his face gradually grew increasingly unsightly to behold.

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RWX's Thoughts

Here are the first two chapters of the week!

Chapter 16: Rage

Iyerre could sense that two of the Exalts in control of the Eight Revolutions Spacetime Temple had just been slain. Clearly, the situation had just taken a turn for the worse. Generally speaking, so long as the formation protecting the temple was undamaged the Exalts in control wouldn't be killed.

A short while later, he could sense that the other six Exalts had all died as well.

"All eight of them died. All they needed to do was trap Emperor Darknorth for eighty-two days. They just needed to hold out for a few more days... those useless idiots!" Iyerre felt rage blazing away at his chest. He had been preparing for countless aeons. Victory had been within his grasp... but at the most critical moment, his servants had been unable to keep Emperor Darknorth confined. How could he not be angered by this?

"If I can't kill Emperor Darknorth, I'll have to switch to the second plan and start killing off the other Autarchs one-by-one." Iyerre nodded slowly.

This was a more difficult prospect. Killing Emperor Darknorth would have given him a 99% chance of success. Now that Ning had escaped, his chances of success had just dropped sharply. Still, he remained confident in his overall chances. He knew what forces he had available and what his opponents were capable of, which was why he felt so confident.

Iyerre suddenly waved his hand. Whoosh! Three figures suddenly appeared by his side. Their auras were all tremendously powerful, far more powerful than the auras of ordinary Sithe Exalts. All three of them appeared humanoid, and it looked as though two were male while one was female. The first man was dressed in black robes, while the second was dressed in red robes. As for the woman, she was dressed in dazzlingly beautiful silver robes and had a soul-stirring smile on her face.

"Iyerre." The three bowed fractionally to show respect, but they addressed him simply as 'Iyerre' rather than giving him the title of 'almighty Iyerre' as most Sithe Exalts did.

"It is now time for the three of you to take action," Iyerre said.

"You need to remember your promise," the black-robed man said sinisterly.

"Don't worry. After this battle is over, I'll give you your freedom and also give you treasures as a form of thanks. My master himself has personally attested to this. Are you really worried that I would go back on my word?" Iyerre said.

The three traded glances, then nodded.

"Starting today, we shall operate in two groups," Iyerre said.

"Eh? What's this? You won't be needing us to help you against Emperor Darknorth after all? Oh, I know. Those useless subordinates of yours weren't able to tie him down for long enough, right?" the silver-robed woman laughed. The two men next to her had mocking smiles on their faces as well.

Iyerre frowned slightly, then continued: "Yes. They weren't able to tie him down. Emperor Darknorth has already escaped! Our only choice is to carry out our second plan. The four of us will work separately, with you three in one team and me by myself. The cultivators don't even know that we exist, so if we are careful we might just be able to ambush and kill two of their leaders at once."

"Agreed." The three all nodded.

"Remember, once we separate you need to hide behind the treasure I gave you. Don't reveal any hint of your aura at all. Once the Chaosverse discovers any traces of your auras, the cultivator leaders will also be instantly warned as to how dangerous you are," Iyerre said.

Iyerre was at such a high level of enlightenment that he could cut off all detection from the Chaosverse by himself, but the Sithe Exalts and the three people before him could not. Thus, they had to use the treasure which Iyerre had given them! This was the reason why Ning and the others hadn't noticed any of the hidden dimensions prior to them disgorging their contents at the start of the war.

“Don’t worry. We won’t make such foolish mistakes,” the red-robed man smirked.

“This is your first time entering a different Chaosverse. It is best to be cautious, as you are unable to use the power of the Dao here. You’ll be much weaker than you are used to,” Iyerre warned. These three weren’t his subordinates, and so he could not command them. All he could do was offer them warnings, for fear of them making a mistake and revealing themselves before they managed to kill a native Autarch. If that happened, this war would become even more difficult to win.

The cultivator Autarchs were in their own Chaosverse and backed by the boundless power of the Dao. All of them were mighty beyond measure, and the only way to kill them was to catch them off-guard! Once Iyerre revealed himself, the cultivator leaders would be able to quickly flee and hide from him.

As for Emperor Darknorth... he was the most powerful of the local cultivators. If Iyerre had to fight him by himself, victory was far from assured. Iyerre was still being suppressed by this Chaosverse, after all! That was why he had brought his second trump card as well. He had been planning to work alongside those three powerful experts. Together, they would’ve spelled certain doom to Ning.

But of course... that was only if Ning had remained trapped inside the temple! Outside the temple, Ning could flee whenever he wanted to. It was very difficult to kill anyone who was of the same level of strength.

“Let’s head out,” Iyerre instructed.

Whoosh! An ordinary-looking realmship suddenly appeared next to him with a Hegemon in control of it. This Hegemon was a Sithe descendant who had been born into this Chaosverse, and so his aura was identical to that of an ordinary cultivator’s.

The Hegemon was responsible for control of the realmship and sending it hurtling through the Chaosverse, while the three experts would remain hidden within a treasure the Hegemon carried.

“Very good.” Iyerre watched as the realmship departed, cold light

shining in his eyes. “Thus far, the cultivators have only lost a few avatars. None of them have actually perished! I’ll wager that they have no idea that the temples were only meant to confuse them, making them lower their guard once they ‘knew’ what they were up against. Those weren’t my real trump cards at all.”

“Come, then. Let’s see who shall be the first ‘Autarch’ I kill once I reveal my presence.” Iyerre waved his hand, causing a white lotus to appear in his palm.

Rumble... Iyerre’s energy flowed into the white lotus, quickly spreading out to cover an extremely vast area that was a hundred times greater than the area Ning could scan using his godsense! Iyerre could accomplish this because he had vastly surpassed all the others in terms of insight, even though he was being suppressed by the Chaosverse. As for the white lotus, it was an incredibly valuable scanning treasure which his master had helped him forge.

“So... who shall be the first to die?” Iyerre smiled as he stepped into a spatial rift, hurtling through spacetime. He moved to one region after another, wandering through many different regions. Ever since the temples had appeared, the cultivator Autarchs had stopped attacking in person and had only sent out their avatars to do battle. Thus, actually locating one of them was no easy feat.

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Time flowed on, one day after another. In the end, Autarch Skyfeeder and Autarch Bolin’s trapped avatars all ended up perishing in battle. However, the temples ended up being trapped by the other Autarchs who cast giant formations around them, making it impossible for them to flee!

Thus far, the Sithe had revealed a total of five temples. These temples had cost the cultivators three Autarch avatars belonging to Bolin, Skyfeeder and Titanos. As for the temples themselves? Ning had captured one, while the other four had been sealed and rendered immobile.

The cultivators had lost three peak power avatars, but they quickly began to remake new ones, even though the new ones would be

significantly weaker for quite some time.

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Over two months after Ning had escaped the Eight Revolutions Spacetime Temple.

Whoosh! Iyerre's muscular form suddenly exited a spacetime rift and appeared within a realmverse. He continued to hold that white lotus in his hands as he carefully scanned the vast area around him. "Eh?" Iyerre revealed a look of delight.

During the past two months, he had been searching for the Autarchs in a manner that was reminiscent of looking for a needle in a haystack. Thankfully, he was able to warp through spacetime just as fast as the Autarchs were, while his scanning treasure completely surpassed Autarch-level capabilities! During the past two months, he had managed to discover Autarch Stonerule's avatar... but to reveal himself in exchange for just an avatar? There was no way Iyerre would make that type of trade!

"I've finally found one of the actual Autarchs. Hm... this aura seems familiar. I encountered it countless times over the aeons. Isn't this Autarch Mogg, who stood guard over our 'sealed' lands for all those years?" Iyerre revealed a smile. "Perfect. Autarch Mogg... I'll use your life and your blood to anoint my war-banner."

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A mountain peak which was floating in space. There were some ordinary-looking log cabins at the top of this mountain, and a tall, skinny, black-robed figure was seated in the lotus position within one of those cabins. His face was covered with scales, and his eyes were shut.

The temples were all quite troublesome to deal with, and so the Autarchs had chosen to draw back all of their true bodies and only permitted their avatars to roam the outside world.

This mountain peak might look ordinary, but it had been personally fashioned by Autarch Mogg for him to cultivate in. Without his permission, not even the other Autarchs would be able to approach

without him noticing.

But... right at this moment a barefoot and gray-robed figure suddenly appeared before the mountain peak. This figure had a benevolent, sympathetic smile on his face.

It was Iyerre!

Chapter 17: Iyerre Vs Mogg

Iyerre stood there in empty space, staring at the floating mountain before him and the clearly visible log cabin at the very top. Given his abilities, he was able to sense that within the log cabin sat Autarch Mogg.

Generally speaking, for someone like Autarch Mogg, it was impossible for him not to notice when someone was staring at him. However, Iyerre was able to do so without him noticing anything at all.

“Autarch Mogg of the cultivators. He really spent quite a bit of effort putting this mountain together. It is filled with all sorts of seals and scanners.” Iyerre smiled as he continued to inspect the place. Autarch Mogg’s various warning systems and barriers were perhaps quite troublesome for other major powers on his level, but they were nothing more than parlor tricks to someone like Iyerre.

Iyerre was able to see immediately through the many flaws of these defenses. This was due to the far superior level of insight he possessed! He had been able to create things like the Annihilation Hive and the formation temples, all of which had stunned Ji Ning and Titanos. Everyone had been certain that only a Lord of Chaos could’ve created such incredible edifices.

Ning and the others certainly weren’t able to create such things, but finding a few weak spots and exploiting them was much easier. Even so, only Autarch Titanos had been able to devise the reverse-vortex formation, while Ning had spent many days before managing to overcome the Eight Revolutions Spacetime Temple.

This was a testament to the difference in insight between them!

When the Autarchs had set down those many layers of seals around the heart of the Sithelands, they have felt that the Sithe would be unable to escape... but in truth, those seals had been an utter joke to Iyerre, who was able to bypass them with ease. The only reason he pretended his forces were sealed away was to ensure that the cultivators would lessen their vigilance against him. In truth, he had long ago sent his countless

Hegemons and Emperors to the various secret dimensions.

"This mountain might be able to stop the Autarchs, but it cannot bar my path." Iyerre smiled as he walked closer towards it.

Whoosh. His entire body became vaguely incorporeal and semi-translucent. He slowly strolled forwards, moving towards the mountain peak and then climbing up it.

The many barriers atop the mountain were completely incapable of barring his path. Autarch Mogg was highly skilled in the Dao of Space, and his various seals and barriers were all dimensional in nature. However, Iyerre was using an even more profound application of the mysteries of space to become part of ordinary space itself, making the barriers completely ineffective against him.

After walking for ten seconds, Iyerre came to a sudden halt. He frowned slightly as he stared at the distant log cabin. "A Dao Domain field?" This was a bit more troubling. Dao Domains were also known as Essence Domains. Ning had his Sword Dao Domain, while Autarch Mogg had his Space Daobirth Essence Domain.

This was a time of war. Although Autarch Mogg's true body was not taking part in combat right now, he still vigilantly kept his domain up at all times. He didn't put too much effort into it, but it was still enough to cover half of the mountain. Any enemies who penetrated this mountain would be instantly discovered by his domain.

"The power of his domain comes from the Chaosverse itself; it represents a domain formed by the power of the prime essences. I can avoid the prime essences and make it impossible for them to detect me, but I'd be discovered as soon as I entered the reach of his domain." Iyerre pondered this question. "Suppressed by this Chaosverse, I'm unable to use any of the Dao's power at all. I'm stronger than these native Autarchs, but not by that much. I don't have the overwhelming advantage that I should."

This was why he had brought three mighty helpers when he had gone off to fight Ning. Now that he knew Ning had escaped, Iyerre had parted ways from the three. They were each responsible for killing one Autarch...

but now that they had separated, Iyerre ‘only’ had a 80% chance of killing Autarch Mogg, who was even weaker than Ning.

“I’m hidden in the darkness. He has no idea how strong I am. I’ll definitely be able to kill him in this battle.”

“Time to attack.” Iyerre began to make his move. He reached out with his ivory-skinned right hand, penetrating the Space Daobirth Essence Domain and sending a series of gentle, comfortable ripples straight into the mind of Autarch Mogg, who was still seated in the log cabin.

“Hrm?” Autarch Mogg suddenly felt very comfortable and at peace. This gentle feeling caused a hint of a smile to naturally appear around his lips. Freedom... release... the glorious joy brought by the light filled his every thought, banishing all his worries and concerns.

Whoosh! The alabaster hand shot out with incredible speed, piercing through the various spatial barriers and the impediment of the Essence Domain to strike towards the log cabin.

His domain had clearly been intruded upon... but right now, Autarch Mogg only felt a sense of relief and release, as though he had never been as free and relaxed as he was right now. “It’s all in the past now. All my worries and concerns are over... wait. No. The war against the Sithe just started. We’re in the middle of a war! How could I possibly be truly relaxed and carefree?” Autarch Mogg quickly came back to his senses, and when he did he immediately ‘saw’ that hand pierce through his domain. By now, it had already reached the log cabin.

The alabaster hand passed straight through the cabin itself, not damaging it in the slightest. A tremendous sense of danger filled Autarch Mogg’s mind, terrorizing him.

“How could I have ignored it when it passed through my domain? How could I have been drawn into a state of complete relaxation without even realizing it?” Autarch Mogg was utterly terrified by the implications of this. Being trapped in an illusion was one thing, but this had been no illusion! His spirit and his thoughts had been manipulated without him even realizing it, even though he was an Autarch! He had only come back

to his senses after sensing the obvious contradiction of him being at ‘peace’ during a time of war.

“Who? Who did this?!” Autarch Mogg had no time to analyze things. He immediately manifested six arms, clasping a saber in each hand and using them to launch a marvelous coordinated attack against that alabaster hand. His saber-light flashed like dimensional edges, moving with inscrutable speed.

The alabaster hand ‘danced’ towards him in such a gentle, beautiful, and graceful manner that Autarch Mogg’s spirit was shaken once more. Flick! The fingers of that hand gently brushed against the saber-light, causing it to be dispersed and redirected elsewhere. Flick! Flick! Two of Mogg’s other sabers were pushed aside as well. The alabaster hand had used almost no power to defend, but none of Autarch Mogg’s attacks were able to land on it.

Mogg’s three remaining sabers spun in concert to form a tight defense around him out of saber-light that was linked together with space itself. It was as though an independent dimension was standing in front of him, helping him block.

Riiip! The giant hand suddenly became bright and sharp, tearing past two of the sabers. Mogg’s defensive saber-arts were his pride and joy, but they were completely unable to defend against this giant hand. As for the dimensional barrier he had erected before him, it was instantly pierced through as the giant hand stabbed at Autarch Mogg’s chest.

“Run!” Autarch Mogg was truly stunned and terrified. The seven Autarchs had often sparred against each other and held Dao debates with each other, but not even the most powerful (Ji Ning) had been able to gain such a major advantage over him in their fights.

“This person is significantly more powerful than even Darknorth!” Autarch Mogg exclaimed to himself in amazement.

As he retreated, the light from the giant hand had already reached out to stab him in his chest. Autarch Mogg could sense a sharp, penetrative force dig deep into his body, causing him to vomit out a mouthful of blood. He

hurriedly summoned the mana in his body to resist this attack, but the invading energy was extremely difficult to deal with. In the end, Autarch Mogg was only able to cancel out the invading energy with his mana by throwing an enormous amount of energy at it. This had actually cost him more than 30% of his total power.

A single clash had quickly resulted in him being badly wounded!

Boom! Autarch Mogg was sent flying into the walls of the log cabin from this blow. The log cabin instantly blew apart, and even the barriers surrounding the area began to tremble. The surrounding area collapsed, transforming into a dark region of primordial chaos... and from within the darkness emerged a gray-robed, barefoot man who strode through the collapsing dimension with ease, completely unaffected.

“Who are you?!” Autarch Mogg shouted frantically. In all his battles against the Sithe, he had never once encountered any individual who held such a terrifying advantage in power over him.

“My name is Iyerre. I’m here to kill you.” Iyerre smiled, but he moved incredibly fast. He gave Autarch Mogg no reprieve at all, charging towards him right away.

“Flee.” Autarch Mogg knew that he had just run into a terrifyingly strong foe. If this battle continued, he’d probably end up dying here. Without hesitation, he chose to immediately flee!

When Iyerre saw that Autarch Mogg was trying to warp through spacetime to escape, he tapped his foot downwards. “Freeze.” An invisible ripple sprang out, completely sealing off spacetime in the area around them, making it impossible to warp away!

“He’s actually even more formidable than I am when it comes to the Dao of Space?!” Autarch Mogg could quickly sense how spacetime had been locked away. He himself was also capable of suppressing spacetime, but he wouldn’t be able to do it this easily or to this effect. He couldn’t help but feel amazed as he transformed into a streak of light and began to physically flee.

Iyerre frowned as he watched Autarch Mogg flee: “These native

Autarchs are able to use the boundless power of the Dao. In my homeland, I could exterminate these creatures with the wave of a hand... but in their own Chaosverse, killing them is really quite difficult.”

Chapter 18: Golden Bridge of Freedom

An ordinary chaos planet. A white-robed Ji Ning was seated in the lotus position atop a boulder, surrounded by a 100x temporal acceleration field. He was trying to deconstruct and solve the formations protecting the temple which had been sealed away by Autarch Stonerule! It remained a source of potential trouble and Ning felt that it was best to get rid of it.

“Eh?” Ning’s face suddenly tightened. He could sense that a new, terrifying danger had just appeared far in the distance. This danger was so great that Ning could sense his heart clenching. It was every bit as dangerous as the Annihilation Hive.

“What’s going on?” Ning was puzzled by this, as were the other Autarchs. Everyone could sense this terrifying new threat.

As soon as Iyerre had attacked Mogg, the prime essences of the Chaosverse had immediately detected and locked onto him. This was their first time ‘finding’ him and realizing what a terrifying threat he posed.

Perhaps he wasn’t an immediate a threat as the Annihilation Hive had been, but he was an expert who had reached incredible levels of insight. So long as he was alive, he would cause endless troubles for this Chaosverse. He could even create new Annihilation Hives! Strictly speaking, he was more dangerous than anything else around.

Suddenly, Ning could sense a message coming from Autarch Mogg: “I just suffered an attack from a Sithe expert. He attacked me by himself, and he was able to completely bypass all of the formations and seals I set down around myself. He even managed to invade my domain while influencing me so that I didn’t notice in the slightest. Thankfully I was able to recover in time, but even so he was able to deal me a heavy injury in our first head-on clash. He’s too strong, far stronger than me and significantly stronger than even Darknorth. If I had to fight him head-on, I’d probably die after just a few rounds of battle.”

“What?!” Ning was shocked, as were the other Autarchs who were receiving this information at the same time.

Since when had the Sithe become so powerful as to be able to overwhelm an Autarch in sole combat? In all these years, it was an ironclad rule that Autarchs were completely invincible in sole combat.

"What type of treasures did he use?" Ning immediately asked. Autarch Titanos and the others were asking the exact same question as well.

"Nothing. He didn't use any treasures at all. He didn't even use a weapon. His hand alone dealt me a grave wound! And... he said his name is 'Iyerre'!" Autarch Mogg said.

"He didn't even use a weapon, but was still able to heavily injure Mogg in just one clash?" Ning was stunned. "I can't believe such a powerful figure managed to remain hidden for so long. He must have been biding his time for aeons... and now that he's revealed himself, he's definitely going to launch an all-out attack. Why doesn't he use a weapon? Is it perhaps because weapons are essentially meaningless to him? Or is it perhaps that his hands ARE his weapons? Either way, he's relying on his own power!"

The information which Autarch Mogg had sent over caused many different thoughts to flicker through Ning's mind.

"The Sithe are suppressed by our Chaosverse and unable to use any of the power of the Dao at all! For him to be this powerful while suppressed, how powerful would he be if he could use the Dao?" Ning mused to himself, "There's no way he's an ordinary Autarch, nor can he be merely an Omega Emperor! It is highly likely that he is actually an Autarch of an Omega Dao!"

An Omega Autarch! This was the only possibility Ning could come up with which could explain this person's strength. Ning wasn't the only one to come to this conclusion; the other Autarchs did as well.

In truth, they had suspected this possibility long ago. They had long postulated the possibility that the real instigator of the Sithe incursion was an Omega Autarch, but all of them had believed that someone who had reached such an invincible level as the Sithe Lord of Chaos wouldn't have taken the risk of entering a 'foreign' Chaosverse. Once he came in, he

would lose his connection to his own Chaosverse and be suppressed by the ‘foreign’ Chaosverse, resulting in him being so dramatically weakened that he could very well perish.

In the outside world, a Lord of Chaos was completely invincible. Why take the risk? But now, a Sithe named Iyerre had appeared. Could it be that he was a second Omega Autarch of the Sithe Chaosverse?

“This person named Iyerre,” Autarch Mogg continued, “Is overwhelmingly powerful. I’m absolutely certain that he is an Omega Autarch. I can think of no other possibilities! He’s reached incredible levels of insight and is able to suppress spacetime with ease, and he’s even better at it than me. My insights into the mysteries of space are like a joke to him. They are completely ineffective. He’s definitely surpassed me in the Dao of Space!”

“An Omega Autarch!” Ning and the others instantly were certain of this. This ‘Iyerre’ had a higher level of insight than the Autarchs and was superior to Mogg in the Dao of Space, which was Mogg’s specialty. He had to be an Omega Autarch!

“Be careful, Mogg,” Ning sent back. There was nothing they could do to help, because they were all too far away. It would all be up to Autarch Mogg himself.

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Autarch Mogg was continuing to flee through space.

“Autarch Mogg!” the pursuing Iyerre suddenly roared from behind.

Boom! An invisible wave of force instantly surged into Autarcoh Mogg’s body. Autarch Mogg felt as though the world around him had changed, transforming into a dazzlingly beautiful ocean while he himself had become a seagull soaring through the skies above it.

“Break!” Autarch Mogg had a perfect Dao-heart and a powerful truesoul. This mighty shout allowed his tremendous willpower to instantly tear the illusion to shreds.

The casting of the illusion and the breaking of the illusion had happened

almost instantaneously. “Your illusions are a bit tougher than Stonerule’s, but they still don’t amount to much,” Autarch Mogg replied, his voice echoing in the emptiness of space.

“Damn.” Iyerre frowned when he saw this. In a foreign Chaosverse, he was unable to use the power of the Dao and was suppressed as well, but in at least one area he remained at peak power – illusions! This was because illusions were aimed directly at the soul and truesoul. The greater your insights into the art of illusions were, the more powerful your illusions would become. The Dao had little to do with it. Alas, Iyerre was an Omega Autarch but had not reached Autarchy through the Dao of Illusions.

If Ning for example became an Omega Autarch, it would be through the Omega Sword Dao. His specialty would still be the sword! The same was true for Iyerre, who was skilled in the Dao of Light.

“You won’t be able to escape.” Iyerre gritted his teeth, unleashing one of his ultimate attacks.

Anywhere else, he could use any techniques as often as he pleased. Here in this Chaosverse, however, he had to consider how much energy these techniques would take up. His energy consumption was commensurate to his vast insights, and replenishing energy was extremely difficult for him.

“Omnipresent Light!” Iyerre’s body suddenly began to release a vast amount of light. Countless rays of light soared out in every single direction, illuminating every part of the vast void around them. The rays of light illuminated even Autarch Mogg himself, and when they shone upon him he felt them pressing down upon him with terrifying power, trying to force him to kneel down. This tremendous pressure caused him to slow down dramatically.

This was the most powerful domain-type technique which Iyerre had created after becoming an Omega Autarch. Wherever his light reached, all had to submit to him!

In the outside world, his light alone could actually kill ordinary Autarchs. Here in this Chaosverse, it was dramatically weakened and so only served to generate a suppressive effect.

"How could there be such a powerful binding effect? It's far stronger than any of my domains!" Autarch Mogg was shocked. The suppress effective was so powerful that his speed had been nearly cut in half.

Whoosh! Iyerre flew towards Autarch Mogg, his entire body glowing with boundless light and a sympathetic smile on his face. "Why must you fight this, Autarch Mogg? You must be tired."

"Truly impressive, Iyerre. You should be an Omega Autarch of the Sithe race. I'm thoroughly impressed. Even without being able to use one whit of the power of the Dao, you still possess incredible power." Autarch Mogg smiled coldly. "But this is our homeland. Do you really think you can kill me? Hmph!"

Boom! An enormous golden bridge that was a million kilometers long suddenly appeared behind Autarch Mogg. The bridge even had a refined, three-story tower next to it, and Autarch Mogg was standing right at the entrance to the tower. He smiled coldly as he stared at the distant Iyerre: "Iyerre, dare you step onto my bridge?"

"What is this?" Iyerre's face turned grim. He could clearly sense that this vast golden bridge was emanating an aura of terrifying power, power which came from the prime essences of this Chaosverse.

"You Sithe have your trump cards, but so do we! Did you think we had none? Did you think we spent all these countless aeons just waiting for death like fools?" Autarch Mogg stood there atop his bridge at the entrance to the tower: "This should be the final, last-gasp attempt by you Sithe to take over our Chaosverse. We had been planning to reveal the Golden Bridge of Freedom during the final battle, but you unexpectedly drove me to the brink of death and forced me to reveal it now."

"Golden Bridge of Freedom? It uses the power of the prime essences of this Chaosverse..." Iyerre had an ugly look on his face.

"Yes. As you suspect, it is modeled after your Daoguard Towers!" Autarch Mogg smiled coldly. "We've been analyzing your Daoguard Towers for countless aeons now. Although the Golden Bridge of Freedom isn't quite as marvelous as your Daoguard Towers, it is still able to make

use of some of the power of the Quintessence."

The cultivator leaders had known for many years that calamity could spring upon them anew, and so they had been laboring without pause to prepare for this day. A Golden Bridge of Freedom had some of the effects of a Daoguard Tower. While one was standing atop the bridge, one would be virtually invincible. This was one of the trump cards the Autarchs had been preparing for this war.

Chapter 19: Victory

Only the power of the Chaosverse itself was truly boundless and without limit. When Ji Ning had visited the essence wellspring of the Blazesun Domain, he had discovered that its energies vastly surpassed that of any Autarch's! And that was just the tip of the iceberg when compared to the Chaosverse as a whole. The Chaosverse was so powerful that just attempting to bind it, even without it fighting back, would result in death to Ning and the other Autarchs. Trying to force something like this would result in the collapse of the truesoul!

Its power was simply unimaginable. Compared to the Chaosverse as a whole, the power over the Dao which Ning or the Autarchs could wield was like a drop of water in a vast sea.

The Daoguard Tower was something which could allow powerful experts to make use of a greater amount of the Chaosverse's power! Daoguard Towers were exquisitely designed. After the Autarchs had acquired several Daoguard Towers from the Dawn War, they had spent many years analyzing them before finally creating similar treasures known as Golden Bridges of Freedom which had 30% of a Daoguard Tower's power.

The native cultivators already had the advantage of fighting on home turf. Now that they had Golden Bridges of Freedom, their defensive prowess was dramatically strengthened.

"Come on, Iyerre, oh mighty Omega Autarch! Come and do your worst. Show me just how tough you are! I am in my own homeland and standing atop my Golden Bridge. If you can still kill me, I'll gladly admit defeat!" Autarch Mogg stood at the entrance to the tower, glaring daggers at the distant Iyerre.

"A Golden Bridge of Freedom which is based on our Daoguard Towers, eh?" Iyerre quickly regained his usual equanimity. He smiled coldly: "Fine. Let's just see how powerful you are when standing on your Golden Bridge!"

Boom! Iyerre put his palms together as though in prayer, causing an

utterly dazzling streak of light to appear between them. The light slowly grew brighter and brighter, as though it was the very essence of all light itself! As for his palms, they had become the sole source of light in the entire area and was far more dazzling than the Solar Star of the Three Realms had ever been.

Iyerre simply stood there calmly in space, his palms folded in prayer while emanating increasingly brilliant levels of light.

"He's building up power!" Autarch Mogg's heart was pounding as he stared from atop the Golden Bridge. This strike was clearly going to be far more powerful than the previous one.

This strike could be described as the most powerful strike which Iyerre was capable of. However, it did have a flaw. It wasn't very agile and could only be used as a devastating frontal assault! Even worse, in this foreign Chaosverse it took him a bit of time to build up power even when he was simply drawing upon his own energy reserves. If he had tried to do this earlier when he had ambushed Mogg, the power build up alone would've startled Mogg and sent him fleeing. As for during his pursuit of Mogg, the two were flying far too fast and there was no way he could build up the energies necessary for this technique.

"Damn." Autarch Mogg frowned. "In the end, the Golden Bridge of Freedom remains a pale shadow of a true Daoguard Tower. Its only advantage is that it is mobile while Daoguard Towers are completely immobile, but even so it moves very slowly."

The vast golden bridges were slow and not very agile. They were primarily used to keep their occupants alive, which meant that Autarch Mogg's only choice was to watch as Iyerre built up strength and wait for the attack.

As for putting away the Golden Bridge and then fleeing once more? Without it, he would die even more quickly!

"Exterminate!" Iyerre suddenly roared. His left hand drew backwards while his right hand struck outwards. Instantly, all of the power from those two incomparably dazzling hands of light became concentrated in

his right palm, causing it to glow even more brightly than before! The mighty presence and aura of this attack alone was enough to render Autarch Mogg speechless. If he tried to take this attack head-on by himself, he would definitely be crushed to death by it.

The empty void of space itself seemed to shudder and moan in fear as that giant right palm of incandescent light reached out towards Mogg.

“Not happening!” Autarch Mogg immediately summoned his Golden Bridge, sending it flying upwards to block for him. Alas, while the giant palm wasn’t very agile it was still far more agile than the enormous golden bridge. It was easily able to dodge past the blocking bridge and smashed straight past it. The golden bridge had an awesome aura of the Dao protecting it, but the giant palm smashed straight through the barrier like it was nothing and continued straight for Autarch Mogg.

“Golden Bridge!” Autarch Mogg roared loudly. The tower behind him had six corners and six highly noticeable windows. The tower suddenly emitted six rays of prismatic light filled with the entire bridge’s boundless power and Dao, using them to push back at the giant golden palm.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The six ribbons of light did their best to push the palm back, but they were unable to do so. In the end, all they could do was to bind themselves around the giant palm like chains. The giant palm continued to press onwards, but it was clearly much slower than before.

“Without the bridge, I might not be able to withstand you... but standing atop it, you can do nothing to me!” Autarch Mogg manifested a total of six arms, each wielding a long saber, then used all of his power to attack. Countless dimensional ripples filled the air around him, merging together to form a single giant dimensional blade that smashed against the giant golden hand head-on.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Explosions rang out unabated. The giant golden palm quickly dimmed, then retracted backwards.

Autarch Mogg was smashed backwards against the tower. He vomited out a mouthful of blood, but a crazed smile was on his face: “Haha, Iyerre,

you aren't strong enough!" Although he was injured, he was able to recover before finishing his words.

As for the distant Iyerre, he felt a sense of pity in his heart. He had consumed an enormous amount of power to unleash his most powerful attack. Still, it had been worth it. Now he knew exactly how strong the Golden Bridges of Freedom were.

"Not bad." Iyerre smiled. Whoosh! He retreated backwards, then disappeared without a trace.

Autarch Mogg finally let out a sigh of relief. Iyerre had put him under a tremendous amount of pressure.

.....

Ning and the others were all anxiously awaiting news from Autarch Mogg. All of them were worried about him.

"I'm fine, I'm fine!" Autarch Mogg quickly sent word back to them. Only then did they let out sighs of relief.

"That Iyerre fellow really was powerful. Even though I had the Golden Bridge of Freedom, he was still able to overwhelm me! However, he wasn't able to actually kill me. When he saw this, he chose to leave instead of continuing the fight," Autarch Mogg said.

"Tell us a bit about the fight against Iyerre," Autarch Titanos said.

"Very well." Autarch Mogg began to narrate the battle in detail. Ning and the others listened attentively, working together to analyze what had happened. In truth, it had been a fairly simple battle. Iyerre had only struck a few times in an effort to conserve energy.

"I can't believe Omega Autarchs are still this powerful when they are being suppressed and unable to use any of the power of the Dao." Autarch Titanos let out an amazed sigh. "So the Sithe invaders are definitely led by an Omega Autarch. This is terrible news... and judging from how Iyerre simply left, it's clear that he has other tricks up his sleeve and hasn't been driven to the brink just yet."

"We can't let our guard down until we win the final battle," Autarch Ekong said.

"I'm sorry, friends. I had no choice but to reveal the Golden Bridge of Freedom. Now he knows our most powerful defensive technique," Autarch Mogg said.

They had prepared some trump cards of their own for the final war, but the Golden Bridge of Freedom was their strongest defensive trump card. If even it had been unable to withstand Iyerre's power, they would've been in serious trouble.

In a war, using unexpected trump cards at a critical moment to catch an opponent offguard could produce some truly incredible results! Thus, trump cards generally were saved for the very end. When Ning and Ekong had been trapped within their respective temples, they had faced several dangerous situations but hadn't been driven to the point of revealing their Golden Bridges of Freedom.

In addition, those bridges had a weakness – they could only be used for defensive purposes! Using them within the temples wouldn't have helped Ning or Ekong actually escape!

"Mogg, if you didn't use the Golden Bridge you would've died. Our side would've lost two Autarch-class combatants! That would've been a far greater loss," Autarch Skyfeeder said.

"Be careful, everyone. Iyerre has failed in his first attempt, but he'll probably prepare something even more deadly next time."

"So long as we keep the bridges active, they probably won't be able to do anything to us."

.....

Within the darkness of space. Iyerre stood there in the void by himself, his body covered with a layer of ripples which blocked the Chaosverse from detecting him.

Whoosh. A blurry pillar of light appeared before him which slowly resolved into a trio of figures. These were the three powerful subordinates

he had sent out earlier.

"Iyerre, why have you contacted us?" The two men and the woman looked at Iyerre.

"Have you fought against any of the cultivator leaders yet?" Iyerre asked.

"We're still searching for them. The Chaosverse is simply too large; just finding them is a task in and of itself," the silver-robed woman said.

"I need to warn you that they have something akin to a Daoguard Tower they can use," Iyerre said. "Trap them before attacking them."

"Alright." The three were shocked by this news.

Iyerre nodded then broke the connection.

Chapter 20: Grasslands

Atop a tall mountain located within a desolate, barren planet. At the peak of this mountain there was a stone house. In front of the stone house was a white-haired, dispirited-looking man who was seated by himself and drinking some wine.

This was one of the most supreme leaders of this entire Chaosverse... Autarch Bolin.

“Desolation... destruction...” The white-haired man stared at the vast world before him. He suddenly splashed the wine in his cup towards the world, sending it splattering outwards like a fine drizzle which moistened the earth before him. Slowly, plants began to grow out from the earth, including trees and grass which caused the planet to turn green with life.

The white-haired man frowned slightly as he watched. “The color of life... can it be that an Autarch is only able to control a single Daobirth Essence?” He shook his head. “There should be at least a tiny chance of controlling two.”

He felt certain that he had already reached an incredibly high level of insight into the cycle of life and death; in fact, it wasn’t too far off from his Claw Daobirth Essence in terms of profundity. And yet... no matter how he tried, he remained unable to form his Samsara Daobirth Essence.

“Death and life. Life is absolutely marvelous and intoxicating in its grandeur.” Autarch Bolin watched as the planet transformed, smiling respectfully as he watched life rise in all its awesome grandeur. Suddenly, his face tightened and he turned to stare at the empty void beyond the planet.

The space around the chaos planet had suddenly changed. An enormous being had just appeared within the empty space, and compared to it even the chaos planet was nothing more than the size of this creature’s fist. This creature looked like a giant gray bear, and it stared coldly at the planet and Autarch Bolin with its single cyclopean eye.

“An Autarch-class void dweller?” Autarch Bolin murmured softly to

himself. “And it seems spacetime has been sealed.”

“Cultivator, you shall be the first person I kill within this Chaosverse!” the giant gray bear boomed loudly. It reached out with its giant paw to swat at Bolin. These void dwellers were born with tremendous natural gifts and they each had their own specialties. As for this giant bear, its specialty lay in its terrifying raw strength. Of the various Autarch-class void dwellers Iyerre had caught in the Infinite Void, it was without a doubt the physically strongest.

Riiiiip! The planet was surrounded and protected by many formations, but the giant bear paw caused them all to instantly crumble.

Autarch Bolin stared at the incoming paw coldly, a giant golden bridge with a tower on it appearing before him. Autarch Bolin himself moved to stand in front of the tower.

This was indeed the same type of protective treasure which Autarch Mogg had used, a Golden Bridge of Freedom. Since its existence had already been revealed, Autarch Bolin chose to use it right away as he could sense that this was a dangerous situation he was in.

“Die!” The giant paw came crashing down upon the golden bridge, tearing through its aura of power.

“Playing around with claws in front of me?” A hint of a cold smile flickered across Autarch Bolin face as he manifested six arms. All six of his hands arced into a claw and then tore at the giant furry bear paw slamming down towards him.

These strikes were so ferocious as to cause even the frozen spacetime around them to twist. Autarch Bolin’s claws were filled with unfathomable power. They seemed very ordinary, but they also seemed to contain countless transformations within them.

Boom! Autarch Bolin’s six claws clashed head-on against that giant bear’s paw.

Autarch Bolin couldn’t help but take two steps backwards, while the gigantic Autarch-class void bear stumbled backwards as well. It stared at

Autarch Bolin with some astonishment.

"You aren't too shabby, cultivator. Die!" The giant bear began to go berserk, roaring as it pounced at Bolin. It sent out consecutive blows with its two giant paws, which came crashing down like two vast celestial objects with so much pressure that even spacetime was completely flattened. This attack was so powerful that Autarch Bolin had no choice but to defend himself using the might of the Golden Bridge of Freedom.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The giant Autarch-class void bear continued to furiously assault Autarch Bolin for three full seconds, but it remained unable to do anything to him.

"Vilesky, you aren't going to be able to kill this cultivator as long as he is standing on that golden bridge," a loud voice boomed out. "Give up on trying to do it yourself. You need our help."

Autarch Bolin's face tightened slightly as he turned to stare into the distant void. He barked from the golden bridge, "Show yourselves!"

"Haha, 'show yourselves'? You are ordering us around?"

"Do you really think you are worthy of giving us orders?"

"You are too weak." Multiple voices rang out from the empty space around the world.

Moments later the vast void itself seemed to change, transforming into an even vaster grasslands that had a white layer of clouds in the skies above it. As for Autarch Bolin himself, he was now standing atop the grasslands.

"Eh?" Autarch Bolin stared at the grasslands which had just appeared around him. He inspected it closely, carefully attuning himself to the vital energy contained within every single stalk of grass. "This is an actual, real grassland?"

"Why does it seem as though the grasslands extend off into infinite?" Autarch Bolin inspected the world around him clearly. There were clouds above him, but the grasslands seemed to have no end, stretching off as far as he could see. Despite his power, he still wasn't able to see just how vast

this world was! Was this a joke? He could even see to the ends of a realmverse!

“Break!” Autarch Bolin continued to stand atop his golden bridge as he reached out to tear at the skies, seeking to tear them apart.

Slash! His two hands clawed at the layers of clouds. Autarch Bolin felt as though the clouds were incredibly tenacious. He was able to tear through a few of the clouds, but he wasn’t able to break through all of them!

“I refuse to believe this.” Autarch Bolin began to furiously attack with all six arms, using them to tear at the clouds in the skies.

This was what the cultivator Autarchs usually did. They had such boundless amounts of power that they didn’t fear exhaustion, and so using a furious barrage of attacks to crush one’s foes was usually the best method.

After the time needed to boil a kettle of tea, Autarch Bolin finally managed to completely tear through the final layer of clouds, pulling open a giant gaping hole in the skies.

Swoosh! The golden bridge beneath him rapidly shrank in size as he rode it through the gaping hole.

After flying through the gaping hole, Autarch Bolin first stared downwards at the many clouds he was standing upon, then upwards at the many clouds which still filled the skies above him.

Suddenly, a hoarse voice filled the skies: “Haha, keep clawing your way through. This isn’t like those puny ‘temples’! Although there are only nine layers to this world of grass, each layer is thicker than the last. You have no chance at all of breaking through the final layer of clouds... and you won’t even be able to get there. The shifting fields of spacetime here will ensure that you are forever trapped within the first layer of clouds above the grasslands.”

“Who are you? A Sithe Exalt?” As soon as Autarch Bolin had sensed how spacetime had been suppressed in this area, he had known that the danger was tremendous.

“Don’t compare me to those pitiable fools. I’m not one of Iyerre’s subordinates,” a clear voice suddenly rang out in response within the clouds.

“Grr...” Far away, the clouds suddenly parted to reveal an enormous figure. This was the giant cyclopean bear which had attacked Autarch Bolin earlier.

Riiip. Autarch Bolin immediately turned to stare at two other directions. The clouds parted in two separate places, revealing two different creatures which began to fly towards him. The first was a red-eyed, white-furred humanoid whose body was covered with a bloody red miasma that radiated a demonic aura. Autarch Bolin couldn’t help but shudder slightly – this creature seemed to have been born out of pure malice and spite!

As for the second creature, it was like a giant stormcloud. Its body was blurry and indistinct, but one could vaguely make out hundreds of evil-looking eyes as well as countless tentacles reaching out from the clouds.

“Three Autarch-class void dwellers?” Autarch Bolin remained quite calm. “These Autarch-class void dwellers might be on par with me in strength, but that’s only due to their natural abilities. Their insights into the Dao are laughably low, while I have the Golden Bridge of Freedom protecting me. I should be able to keep myself completely safe... but the world of grass which has imprisoned me is quite marvelous. The grass should all be real, and it has nine layers of clouds as well as three Autarch-class void dwellers protecting it. Thus far, the only place we have seen three Autarch-class void dwellers has been that behemoth hive. None of the temples had any inside.”

The Eight Revolutions Spacetime Temple which had trapped Ning had only held Sithe Exalts. The same was true for the other temples. None of them had Autarch-class void dwellers!

The Annihilation Hive, however, had three. Now that three more had appeared within this world of grass... Autarch Bolin had the feeling that this grassland world was probably far more dangerous than any of those other temples.

What he didn't know was that the world of grass was arguably the most deadly weapon which the Sithe had prepared for this invasion.

Chapter 21: Bolin's Death

A giant one-eyed bear, a red-eyed white-furred humanoid, and a giant stormcloud! The three Autarch-class void dwellers circled Autarch Bolin and his golden bridge from three different directions.

Autarch Bolin didn't panic in the slightest. He had experience in dealing with Autarch-class void dwellers, as he had worked with the others to kill two of them during the Dawn War. Later on, Ji Ning and Autarch Mogg had captured two in the Annihilation Hive and then negotiated with the strongest one to have it leave their Chaosverse. Thanks to these experiences, Autarch Bolin knew two important things about these void dwellers.

First, there was no way to compel Autarch-class void dwellers to swear lifeblood oaths – they had simply entered verbal agreements with the Sithe which they could renege upon at will. Second... they could be negotiated with!

“Gentlemen,” Autarch Bolin sent to the three, “We cultivators have fought against you and your fellow void dwellers on multiple occasions. During the last war we killed two of your kind, and just recently we fought against three more in the behemoth hive the Sithe constructed. We ended up capturing two of them, while the other one decided to work with us and so we granted it safe passage out of our Chaosverse.”

“Hrm?” The three Autarch-class void dwellers circling around Autarch Bolin were slightly startled. They knew that others had been captured by the Sithe, but the three didn't know what had happened to them.

“We have a decided advantage against the Sithe in this war!” Autarch Bolin said persuasively, “Not a single one of us Autarchs have perished in either the Dawn War or this war, while the Sithe have suffered heavy losses and countless casualties. We've captured and slaughtered a large number of their Exalts! I would wager that the one you fear the most is their leader, ‘Iyerre’, right?”

“Heh. Iyerre should be an Omega Autarch. He's very powerful, and

outside this Chaosverse he would vastly outstrip us in might. However, this is our home! The Chaosverse rejects him, preventing him from using any of the Dao's power. He's merely on the same level as us in power! He tried to ambush Autarch Mogg earlier, but in the end he had to retreat with his head hanging low."

"They've suffered catastrophic losses, while not even Iyerre is able to do anything to us. All of us are alive and well. Our side stands a much greater chance of winning this war!" Autarch Bolin continued, "I know that you have been forced to take part in this war. If you insist on battling us to the death, once we win there's no way we will spare you!"

"However, if you choose to betray them and work with us instead, we'll help you out. Afterwards, I'll send you out of our Chaosverse and grant you your liberty. I can swear a lifeblood oath on this," Autarch Bolin said.

"Betray them and join you?"

"Impossible!" The three Autarch-class void dwellers instantly sent messages of rejection.

"Haha, fine. I won't force you to actually betray them. All you need to do is to pull your punches during these battles. Both of us will hold back by 50%! All we need to do is put on a show for the Sithe to watch. I, Bolin, will definitely remember your show of friendship and can swear an oath that once the war concludes, we won't make things difficult for you. We'll send you out of our Chaosverse."

Although the three Autarch-class void dwellers had many misgivings about this, a short while later they sent back a response: "Fine."

"Deal."

"We'll believe you for now."

These void dwellers might look stupid, but in truth the Infinite Void they wandered through was unfathomably vaster than any Chaosverse. The Chaosverses were merely the largest celestial bodies that existed within the Infinite Void! The Infinite Void was so vast that it contained truly innumerable lifeforms. As creatures who rose to reach Autarch-levels of

power, they naturally were quite crafty and understood how to balance pros and cons.

They harbored great hatred for the Sithe, but Iyerre was so overwhelmingly powerful that there was no way for them to fight back against him. Still, Bolin's words had indeed convinced them. There was no guarantee that the Sithe would truly win this war, and so they wanted to prepare a way out for themselves.

"Attack!"

The mental conversation had been an extremely quick one. Anyone watching from the outside world would have simply seen a brief staredown, followed by immediate combat. The three Autarch-class void dwellers began to launch a frenzied series of blows against Autarch Bolin. Even though they were holding back on their strikes, they were still forceful enough to cause spacetime to twist and distort around them.

Autarch Bolin was at a complete disadvantage and had been completely suppressed, but his six arms were able to work together in marvelous fashion, allowing him an airtight defense that completely protected him against their attacks.

Both sides were holding back by 50%, but no one watching from the outside would be able to notice anything at all.

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"These creatures of the Infinite Void do not train in the Dao. They have low levels of insight, rendering their incredible natural gifts completely useless. They clearly have Autarch levels of power and are able to overpower Autarch Bolin, but they aren't able to kill him even though they outnumber him three-to-one." Three people were conversing via godsense in the void beyond this battle.

"We're simply using them to tie him down. They serve well as brutes and foot soldiers. It's enough for them to have completely suppressed him."

"In the end, it'll be up to the three of us."

"Let's find a chance to make our move."

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Autarch Bolin continued to fight from atop the Golden Bridge of Freedom. He seemed to be using all his strength to resist the combined attacks of these three Autarch-class creatures, and in truth these void dwellers had been blessed with ridiculous strength and innate power. They might not have trained in the Dao, but they could break almost anything with raw power! Mogg had found it quite difficult to handle just one of them in the Annihilation Hive. Bolin now had the aid of the Golden Bridge of Freedom, but he still found defending against them difficult even though both sides were holding back.

The reason why he had asked for both sides to hold back was so that he would have the capacity to deal with something unexpected.

Autarch Bolin stood there atop the golden bridge, both himself and the bridge being sent staggering downwards by the force of the void dwellers' blows. Both were sent smashing into the thick clouds below them.

Suddenly...

Whoooosh! An iridescent violet-gold chain suddenly shot out of the clouds, moving as agilely as a snake as it lashed at Autarch Bolin.

"Huh?!" Autarch Bolin turned pale. This whipping motion from the violet-gold chain had a strange cadence and gave off a strange sensation. Only someone who had reached an incredibly high level of insight into the Dao would be able to unleash such a strike. Without question, this was an Autarch-calibre technique... and the power rippling from the chain surpassed even Autarch Bolin's own level of power!

Boom! One of Autarch Bolin's six arms instantly expanded in size, and he reached out with a claw-hand to try and seize that chain.

Faced with Autarch Bolin's full-strength claw attack, the violet-gold chains suddenly switched from a lashing motion to a coiling motion, seeking to wrap themselves around him.

Clang! Autarch Bolin missed with his grab, but one of his fingers manage to land a clawing blow upon the chain. However, the chain

managed to easily deflect the power of his blow and continued with its coiling attack.

Whoosh! Right at this moment, yet another violet-gold chain appeared from the skies above Autarch Bolin. This one descended towards him with overwhelming power, dealing a furious lashing blow against him.

Clank! Clank! Clank! Three more violet-gold chains suddenly appeared from the clouds above, the clouds below, and to his left. Every chain was attacking in a manner which was difficult to defend against! At peak power Autarch Bolin was able to fight with six arms, but he still had to use at least three of them to defend against the three Autarch-class void dwellers while pretending to be wounded by them. And this was with the void dwellers holding back; if they weren't, he would've suffered a truly heavy injury!

Use three arms to fight back against five of those violet-gold chains? He was caught flat-footed and knew that he wouldn't be able to hold on for much longer.

Whoosh! Finally, yet another violet-gold chain appeared to his right. This time, Autarch Bolin wasn't able to defend at all. The chain violently lashed Autarch Bolin across the chest, catching him completely off-guard. Bang! His entire body caved in then completely imploded from the power of this strike, but a heartbeat later his body transformed into countless specks of light instead. He had just used his invulnerable form and was trying to heal.

"Haha, still trying to survive?"

"Your body's been destroyed. Struggling is useless. You are dead."

Those six violet-gold chains flew out with incredible speed and power, showing no mercy at all as they furiously assaulted those specks of light. Autarch Bolin's dispersed energies were being repeatedly annihilated, and just a short while later his fleeing form had been completely annihilated.

He had been completely suppressed in power. Autarch Bolin had been slain just a heartbeat after the six chains had appeared! He had simply been overwhelmed by the number of enemies he faced.

The power quickly fled from the levitating golden bridge, and it came crashing down into the deep clouds below it. It tumbled across the clouds, with even the tower being twisted by the collision.

The sounds of battle finally fell silent, while the six chains disappeared back into the clouds once more.

"Well. That's certainly a shame." The three Autarch-class void dwellers stared at the fallen golden bridge which now lay atop the clouds, feeling rather regretful. They didn't like the Sithe one bit, and they couldn't help but feel a bit unhappy that the native Autarch they had just reached a pact with moments ago had perished almost immediately afterwards.

"Let's go." The three void dwellers quickly departed into the clouds as well, leaving behind just the fallen golden bridge and a few scattered treasures.

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RWX's Thoughts

▣ - That was unexpectedly fast, wasn't it? Poor Bolin.

Chapter 22: Message

Moments later, a willowy, silver-robed woman suddenly stepped out of the silent clouds and moved to stand next to the fallen Golden Bridge of Freedom.

"This weapon Iyerre fashioned is certainly powerful. We were able to crush and kill this native Autarch with ease." The silver-robed woman waved her hand, collecting the fallen treasures and estate-worlds which lay strewn across the clouds, then gave the bridge a close look. "I imagine Iyerre will be interested in taking a closer look at this pseudo-Daoguard Tower."

Whoosh. With a wave of her hand, she collected the golden bridge as well. She then scanned the surrounding area, a delighted smile on her face: "That was pretty easy." She then stepped away into the void and vanished without a trace.

.....

Within a vast sea of fire located within the Great Dark. Many spacetime rifts could be seen at the borders of this sea of fire, and Iyerre was walking through it barefooted. He was hastening towards his proudest creation, the Grassland World... but suddenly, he came to a halt.

"Eh?" An eager look appeared on his face. "It seems they have something to report." A blurry pillar of light appeared in front of him, quickly resolving into three figures. It was the two men and the woman he had sent off earlier. The silver-robed woman was holding a miniaturized golden bridge in her hands, and she was casually flipping it up and down.

When Iyerre saw the golden bridge, he couldn't help but smile: "You succeeded?"

"It was very easy." The silver-robed woman raised an eyebrow. "That native Autarch named 'Bolin' died before we even had to go all-out against him."

"Autarch Bolin?!" Iyerre was unspeakably delighted by this.

Although he was quite confident in the Grassland World, the most powerful weapon he had ever created, he had still been worried that something unexpected might happen. Now that he knew the results, he finally managed to relax. It made sense. The Grassland World was overwhelming powerful, and he had to come up with a way to compel those three into coming here and helping him take control over it. It really wouldn't have made any sense if they had failed.

"Iyerre, you've been suppressed by this Chaosverse to such a degree that although you are a bit more powerful than the native Autarchs, you are still on their same overall level of power! In the end, the weapons you've created are actually stronger than you," the silver-robed woman teased.

"It's true." Iyerre nodded in acknowledgment. "I might be weakened, but my artificing skills remain untouched."

Back in his homeland, Iyerre was so overwhelmingly powerful that these complicated artifacts and treasures were useless to him. A single palm from him would have far more power than any artifact possibly could unleash. Here, however, artifacts like the Grassland World were much more dangerous than even Iyerre himself.

"What should we do next?" the red-robed man asked.

"Shall we keep ambushing the other natives?" the black-robed man said in a cold voice. "The Grassland World can hide its aura and prevent the Chaosverse from sensing and locating it. We can keep hunting them down."

"No." Iyerre shook his head. "Without question, the other Autarchs were notified right away once Bolin died! They'll be extremely cautious and won't give us another chance like this."

He wasn't a fool, and he didn't treat the Autarchs as fools either. Previously, Ning and the others had been certain that they were safe. They never would've imagined that such an overwhelmingly powerful weapon as the Grassland World would appear without them even being able to detect it. The Grassland World had been so powerful that it had only been forced to reveal part of its true power in order to slay Autarch Bolin!

"Then what should we do next?" the silver-robed woman asked.

"Now that you've already revealed yourselves, we should prepare for a frontal clash," Iyerre said with a smile. "We've already killed one of the native Autarchs and seized the initiative! Now, hurry up and send the Grassland World to reinforce the four trapped temples. Go rescue my Exalts and bring them into the Grassland World. They'll be of great use to you there."

"Fine."

"Very well." All three agreed to the order. They all knew that while the Sithe Exalts were individually weak, in sufficient numbers they were still able to be extremely effective in battle. Unlike those foolish Autarch-class void dwellers, the Sithe Exalts had all reached incredibly high levels of insight into the Dao and were the equals of the native Autarchs in insights.

"Let's go. I'll join forces with you as soon as I can," Iyerre said.

The blurry pillar of light vanished.

Iyerre was in a superb mood. There were only seven Autarchs to begin with. Now that Bolin had died, only six were left! Several of the six had seen their original avatars destroyed, and their new avatars remained fairly weak. Another peak avatar had been tied down within the Annihilation Hive. On the Sithe side, none of their peak combatants had been lost to date!

"Given the current situation, we should definitely be able to win a head-on clash." Iyerre smiled.

He had been preparing for this battle for many, many aeons. He had made multiple plans for victory, and as he saw it they were completely flawless.

The simplest plan had been to gain victory through the Annihilation Hive! He hadn't expected it to be resolved that easily, but fortunately he hadn't placed too much hope on gaining victory so easily.

.....

A quiet, ordinary chaos planet. Ning was pacing around, filled with worry. Just now, he had received a message from Autarch Bolin:

"I'm under attack. An Autarch-class void dweller has appeared, and spacetime has been frozen around me!"

Ning felt rather uneasy upon hearing this. Autarch Mogg had been ambushed but had been lucky enough to survive. Now, Autarch Bolin had been ambushed as well? Did the Sithe feel confident in being able to breach the defenses of the Golden Bridge of Freedom? Had they really sent just one Autarch-class void dweller to accomplish this?

"All spacetime around me has been subsumed by a vast world of grasslands. I can't see to the ends of this world. The skies above me are filled with a thick layer of clouds that are incredibly tough. I'm using all my power right now to break through the clouds."

"I've finally broken through the clouds. There's actually an even higher layer of clouds above me!"

"An enemy in this world has just informed me that this place has a total of nine cloud layers, each of which is harder to breach than the last. I apparently have no chance of breaking through the final layer whatsoever, and it is supposedly protected by constantly shifting spacetime which will keep me forever trapped here at the first layer."

"I'm being attacked by a total of three Autarch-class void dwellers."

"Haha... I've managed to successfully persuade them into holding back. They've been forced to take part in this war and don't really want to battle to the death. It was easy to persuade them."

Autarch Bolin continued to send one message after another to the others. Generally speaking, whenever the Autarchs were in a dangerous situation they would constantly send messages so that even if they died, the survivors would gain a better understanding of what dangers the deceased had faced and so wouldn't repeat their mistakes.

Time continued to flow on.

"Not good. A violet-gold chain just appeared from the clouds. Another

one just appeared out of nowhere.”

“These chains are incredibly powerful. They have to be on par with Darknorth’s full-force strikes! They are not only strong, they are also incredibly profound. These chains are definitely being used with Autarch-class techniques. They are very difficult to deal with.”

“Three chains... four chains... five chains! I can’t hold on much longer.”

“Six chains! I can’t hold!”

These messages came very fast, one after the other. As soon as the final message came, Ning could sense that Autarch Bolin’s aura had suddenly vanished from his message-talisman. The talisman had become an ownerless object, with Ning no longer able to sense any karma tying him to Autarch Bolin any further.

The karmic links between them had been completely severed. There was only one explanation for this.

“He d-died? Bolin died?” Ning was stunned. Not just him – all five of the other Autarchs were stunned as well.

An Autarch had died!

There had been dangerous situations in the past, such as when Autarch Ekong had been trapped within that temple or when Autarch Mogg had been hunted by Iyerre... but this was the first time in the entire long history of this Chaosverse that an Autarch had been killed. This was completely unprecedented! Autarch Bolin had just been killed? He was dead?!

Ning felt many complicated emotions. Anxiety, sorrow, pain, grief... and smoldering rage.

“This isn’t the time to grieve. Bolin’s dead. He was trapped within that world of grass, and as soon as those chains appeared he was killed. That world of grass is a hundred times more dangerous than the temples we faced prior to this. We have to be careful not to fall into the same trap.” Autarch Titanos was the first to send a message to the others.

“Agreed. We can’t make the same mistake. Don’t let them succeed with another ambush! We now have two options before us. The first is to enter the Quintessence. There’s no way they would be able to enter the Quintessence without the prime essences discovering them. The second option is for us to maintain a vast domain-type sea of mana around us at all times. The mana will be infused with part of our truesoul, and so we would immediately notice them once they went anywhere near us no matter what type of masking technique they use,” Autarch Skyfeeder immediately sent.

“We can’t set up a sufficiently large domain with our mana. I’m worried that their world of grass is so vast that it could still encompass and trap us when used from outside that range,” Autarch Ekong rebutted.

“Our only choice is to join forces,” Autarch Titanos said.

They quickly began to discuss what their next steps should be. They had paid a high price for this lesson; there was no way they could allow themselves to be ambushed in such a manner again. As for hiding into the Quintessence? They weren’t really willing to take this option.

Just as they were negotiating in the midst of their rage and grief, suddenly... a new message was sent to the six of them from Autarch Bolin’s message-talisman, even though it no longer had Bolin’s aura and appeared to be ownerless.

“I am Bolin. I’m not dead yet!”

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RWX's Thoughts

Kinda wanted to just end the releases here today xD

Chapter 23: Trap

When Bolin reflected on what had just happened, he couldn't help but feel both a sense of fear and joy. When he had been assaulted by those violet-gold chains, he had immediately known that the situation was extremely grim. The chains were attacking with techniques that were just as profound as him, and as soon as all six had appeared he had begun to feel a sense of despair. The difference between them was just too great! Five chains alone probably would've done him in fairly quickly. Six chains had completely broken through his defensive lines.

When his body had been lashed apart, he had transformed into his invulnerable form and attempted to keep himself alive. He wasn't willing to give up until the very last moment, but as those chains had continued to lash away at him and his energies were completely annihilated, he began to feel a mixture of total despair as well as deep resentment in his heart!

In that final instant before his death, he had suddenly broken through the final bottleneck in understanding the mysteries of life and death. He had reached the level of true perfection, and he immediately sent the tiny remaining bits of his dispersed energies which had been mixed into the clouds into a state of 'false death'! This was a new technique which Bolin had naturally and instantly gained when he had mastered his Samsara Daobirth Essence.

The 'false death' state was a state of neither death or life. It was quite marvelous, causing one's aura to completely vanish and all karmic links to be severed. There was no way for anyone to sense his existence.

In truth, Bolin had long ago reached incredible levels of insight into the cycle of life and death. His very aura had changed due to his many aeons spent meditating on its mysteries, and his skill in life and death was very close to his skill in the Claw Daobirth Essence. If it hadn't been for the fact that he had already created the Claw Daobirth Essence, he probably would've long ago formed the Samsara Daobirth Essence.

However, anyone who already mastered a Daobirth Essence would be influenced by it, making it incredibly difficult to break through in a second Daobirth Essence even if one had reached a high level of enlightenment in it. It wasn't until the final moments when he hovered at the brink of death that he managed to understand his final flaws and reach perfection in this Dao.

"So this is how it works. When I had merely mastered ten Hegemonic Daos, the accumulated insights were enough for me to vault into understanding the Claw Daobirth Essence... but in understanding the cycle of life and death, I had to slowly advance one step at a time. I was able to improve the power of this Dao and reach a level which was very close to that of my Claw Daobirth Essence, but it wasn't until I personally was at the verge of death that I understood how to truly master it."

Bolin nodded to himself. "When mastering the first Daobirth Essence, it is easy because nothing interferes with it. The second one, however, is a hundred times more difficult. It requires constant, nonstop searching."

"Fortune and calamity ride together. I was driven to the brink of despair, but it allowed me to master the Samsara Daobirth Essence." Bolin was in a fairly good mood right now.

After entering the 'false death' state he was able to avoid all forms of detection, but of course he didn't dare to take any actions at all. For the sake of making it look real, he had voluntarily abandoned his Golden Bridge of Freedom and some of his other treasures. He didn't discard his message-talisman, however, because only Autarchs could use them. He had given up his many other message-talismans. The Sithe had never seen an Autarch message-talisman before, and so they didn't realize what was missing from the many they had taken from him.

He knew that his friends would probably be heartbroken once he entered that 'false death' state, and so he waited until the opponent left with his treasures and his bridge before stealthily sending them a message through the message talisman:

"I am Bolin. I'm not dead yet!"

.....

This message completely shocked Ji Ning, Titanos, Mogg, and the others.

“Bolin, you are still alive?”

“Is this for real?”

“Why can’t I sense your existence?”

“Are you truly Bolin? Do you have any proof?”

They were all so excited that they could hardly believe it. However, only the original owner of an Autarch message-talisman was able to use it. Logically speaking, there was no way for the Sithe to send any messages once Bolin died! At the same time, they also knew that Iyerre had reached a much higher level of insight than they had. It was possible that he might have a way of decoding their message-talisman, and so they felt a sense of wariness.

“Ahaha! Don’t worry, I really am Bolin. Ekong, I’ll have my avatar meet with you shortly. That’ll be enough to prove that I’m telling the truth.” Autarch Bolin understood his comrades’ misgivings.

Ning and the others kept their avatars fairly close together, as they had been working together on how to deal with the sealed temples. Ning himself was fairly close to Mogg’s avatar, while Bolin’s avatar was fairly close to Ekong’s true body.

After just the time needed to boil a kettle of tea, Bolin’s avatar finished warping through spacetime and reached Autarch Ekong.

“Ekong.” Bolin’s avatar, dressed in black robes, suddenly appeared out of nowhere without causing any sound or stir. No lines of karma appeared either. It was as though it didn’t really ‘exist’ in this world, but when he spoke his voice whispered across an ‘empty’ stretch of the void. Moments later, a few ripples could be seen followed by a towering array of castles appearing in the ‘empty’ region. Autarch Ekong was quite lavish in preparing his dwelling place.

“Is that really you, Bolin?” Autarch Ekong stared at Bolin’s avatar. An

overwhelming sense of familiarity flooded through him, allowing him to feel all but certain that this was Bolin, but he was still wary that this might be one of Iyerre's tricks.

"My true body remains trapped within that world of grass and is still in a false death state. I've blocked out all my auras and all karmic links for fear that the Sithe might be able to find out that I'm alive through karma, and so I was forced to do the same for my avatar. I'll release a bit of energy; test it out for yourself." The black-robed Bolin smiled as he waved his hand, causing a stream of energy to fly out.

Ekong was delighted as soon as he sensed it. This type of energy was far too familiar for him! This was mana formed through the Claw Daobirth Essence! Each expert's mana contained its own unique signature which was completely un-fakable; Ning, for example, had a pure Omega Sword Dao sheen to his mana!

"You spoke of a 'false death' state? What type of state is that, for even us to be unable to sense you?" Autarch Ekong asked curiously.

"I've already taken control over the Samsara Daobirth Essence," the black-robed Bolin said. "Many secrets are hidden within both life and death. Entering a pseudo-dead state was quite simple."

Autarch Ekong stared at the black-robed Bolin, his eyes filled with curiosity. The man was clearly standing right in front of him, but all of Ekong's other senses were telling him that 'Bolin' didn't seem to exist. This odd feeling made him sigh with amazement.

"So you've come to comprehend two Daobirth Essences? What have you gained from it?" Autarch Ekong asked.

"Nothing special besides the fact that I now have two Daobirth Essences to use." The black-robed Bolin shook his head. "We already know that Iyerre is more skilled than Mogg in space and more talented in illusions than Stonerule, and that he vastly outstrips Titanos in artificing. He's extremely formidable in every single area, while his specialty lies in light. Even without the power of the Dao, he's still able to crush us in a fair fight. Now THAT is truly impressive!"

“Those of us who reached Autarchy via fused Supreme Daos will remain ‘ordinary’ Autarchs. Even if we gain an additional Daobirth Essence, we’re still far from reaching the level of the Omega Autarchs,” the black-robed Bolin said with a laugh. “But of course, the power of the Samsara Daobirth Essence is tremendous and I’ve grown quite a bit stronger due to it. I’m also able to use these two different Daobirth Essences together. Who knows? Titanos might not be a match for me now, haha...”

Different essences had different levels of power. Previously, Autarch Titanos had been the strongest save for Ning because his was the Karma Daobirth Essence. The Samsara Daobirth Essence was also an extraordinary essence, and given that Bolin had another essence as well, it made sense that he had grown significantly stronger.

“Good, good, good!” Ekong was overjoyed. For someone on their side to be strengthened was wonderful news. He quickly sent word to the others, all of whom were similarly overjoyed. For Bolin to still be alive was simply wonderful.

Autarch Stonerule suddenly sent to everyone, “According to Bolin, that world of grass seems to be extremely powerful. I’ll wager we haven’t seen its full power yet.”

“Yes, it was absolutely terrifying. It completely dominated me! If I didn’t manage to master the Samsara Daobirth Essence at the critical moment and avoid detection via the ‘false death’ state, I probably would’ve died for real. Even at my current level of power, I won’t be able to escape,” Bolin said.

Ning said, “Given how powerful this world of grass is, we have to come up with some sort of counter-measure.”

“I’m currently right in the middle of that world. I know exactly where it is, so you don’t need to worry about being ambushed,” Bolin said.

“Huh? Ah, right! Haha.” Ekong laughed.

“Bolin’s within the world of grass, which means we now have a perfect understanding of its movements.” Titanos chuckled as well. This was an unexpected bonus.

"Where is the world of grass right now?" Ning asked.

"It's been advancing at high speed for quite some time. Judging from its path, it should be headed towards the 'Nine Cicadas Temple'," Bolin said.

Ning and the others were all enlightened. Of the temples the Sithe had sent out to attack the Autarchs, one had been defeated by Ning while four had been sealed away. The Nine Cicadas Temple had been given that name by the Autarchs because it was covered with extremely strange carvings of nine cicadas on them. The temple was controlled by nine Sithe Exalts, the most of any temple they had encountered thus far.

"If it is flying towards the Nine Cicadas Temple, it is probably planning on rescuing those Exalts," Ekong said.

"We can't let them join forces!" Ning said hurriedly.

"The Sithe have repeatedly taken advantage of their higher level of insight to ambush us!" Autarch Titanos said. "Now, thanks to Bolin, we know the exact path this world of grass is taking. That means we can set a trap for it and play a nasty little trick on that terrifying weapon."

"Right. Let's set up a trap!" Ning's eyes lit up.

"Let's give them a good hard beating," Autarch Mogg agreed hurriedly. He had been ambushed not too long ago and was itching for revenge.

"Hopefully, we'll destroy the entire thing," Bolin said.

The prospect of giving the Sithe a taste of their own medicine was making their blood pump with excitement!

Chapter 24: An Autarch Task Force

Ji Ning and the others began to work hard to produce a plan which would be perfectly tailored to dealing with this terrifying new threat, the ‘Grassland World’. Everyone including Ning knew deep in their hearts how important this battle would be. In fact, it could be said that if they won this battle they would probably have won the entire war! If they lost, then they would probably have lost the war as well.

The price of defeat was simply too great. All of the countless native lifeforms of this entire Chaosverse, from the lowliest of ordinary mortals to the most exalted of Hegemons and Autarchs, would be completely exterminated! Not a single one of them would be left alive! The entire Chaosverse would be completely remade into one which was suitable for the Sithe and inimical to all others.

Ning knew that they couldn’t afford to lose this battle! By now, the Sithe Hegemons and Emperors no longer posed much of a threat. It was up to the final battle between the supreme elites of each side.

“We destroyed one of those temples and trapped four of them! Even if Iyerre gets personally involved, we should be able to withstand him via the Golden Bridges of Freedom. Right now, the only thing the Sithe have which poses a threat to us is that world of grass. In truth, it is an apocalyptic danger,” Autarch Titanos said. “It only needed a fraction of its power to kill Bolin. Even though Bolin now controls two Daobirth Essences, he’s still forced to hide via the ‘false death’ technique and doesn’t dare to face it head-on! In other words, none of us are a match for that world of grass in sole combat.”

Ning agreed with this assessment. The terrifying power which the world of grass had displayed previously was enough to cause even Ning to shiver with fear.

“We’ll never have a better chance than this,” Autarch Titanos said. “We are hidden in darkness, while they stand revealed to us! We can make all preparations necessary and focus all of our power against the world of

grass.”

“When Iyerre ambushed Mogg, he didn’t produce anything even as remotely terrifying as the world of grass,” Autarch Bolin said. “That was his ‘big reveal’, so he definitely would’ve gone all-out in that attack. For him to not use a ‘world of grass’ leads me to suspect that the entire Sithe race only has a single such weapon. I’m sure that it wasn’t easy for him to make such a terrifying weapon. Hell, I’m amazed they were able to create it at all!”

“Right. If Iyerre didn’t carry one, that’s probably because there only IS one.”

“If we can defeat the world of grass, we would’ve gotten rid of our greatest threat and essentially won this war,” Autarch Stonerule agreed. “This is now our last, best chance to gain victory.”

“We have to win.”

“We must win!” The seven strongest members of the cultivator civilizations were filled with determination to win.

Ning and the others were going to put everything they had into this fight. Every single one of them was going to take part, and so they began to hasten towards the Nine Cicadas Temple from their respective stations throughout the Chaosverse. Autarch Stonerule was the slowest when it came to travel speed, and so Autarch Skyfeeder actually went to him to ‘carry’ him with her.

Just a bit over a month later, they all reunited near the Nine Cicadas Temple. As for the Grassland World, it was still on its way. It wasn’t quite up to par with Autarchs when it came to warping through spacetime.

“We still have nearly a month left.”

The bulky Nine Cicadas Temple hung there in the void of space, the nine Sithe Exalts still focusing on defending it from within. Ning and the others wouldn’t be able to breach its defenses anytime soon, so they simply left it trapped within their formations.

The Autarchs were located in a region of empty space outside the

formations sealing the temple away. Autarch Titanos' two fleshy antennae were standing up straight, quivering with killing intent. He began to make the arrangements: "During this next month, we need to finish setting up any and all helpful formations. We don't have much time. Move fast, everyone."

"Alright," Ning, Bolin's avatar, Autarch Skyfeeder, Autarch Ekong, Autarch Stonerule, and Autarch Mogg all chorused in unison.

Time began to flow in a rapidly accelerated pace around them. Autarch Skyfeeder was responsible for keeping time sped up, while Ning and the others were responsible for setting up the formations. They already knew exactly where the Grassland World would be arriving, and so they would set up the grand formation there! The entire formation covered a huge area, as it was meant to encompass the entire Grassland World.

In order to make the formation as strong as possible, they even infused some of the mysteries of the Golden Bridges into the formation. When the time came, the formation would be ready to accumulate an enormous amount of the Chaosverse's power.

The formation was divided up into two different parts. The outer formation would be maintained by Ning, Bolin's avatar, and the true bodies of the Autarchs. The inner formation would be maintained by the other five Autarch avatars. The inner formation would serve as the vanguard for doing battle against the Grassland World; if they suffered any casualties, the inner formation would be the first to go.

"Haha, I'm done."

"The formation's been set up."

Ning and the others had worked hard and quickly. In the end, they managed to finish the entire grand formation with two days to spare.

"I'll take the Dust-1 position." Ning stood there within a specific part of the formation. Boom! The overwhelming power of the Chaosverse instantly crossed an infinite distance to appear in the region around him. Ning's location seemed to have transformed into an endless vortex of darkness which devoured all of the power of the prime essences!

This grand formation had two ‘poles’ which represented Yin and Yang. Ning was responsible for one of them while Titanos was responsible for the other, as the two were both skilled in formations.

As for the other five, they were responsible for helping and strengthening the power of the formation.

“The formation is complete. All of us are now much more powerful than we are normally. With so many empowered Autarch-class combatants working together and joining forces, we’ll definitely be able to destroy the Grassland World.” Autarch Titanos let out a loud laugh, completely confident in their chances.

“Right. The chains that attacked me were powerful,” Bolin’s avatar agreed, “But we have so many Autarch-class combatants that we would have more than enough power to each take on a single chain without being affected.”

“Unfortunately, two of the five avatars at the vanguard are very weak. My avatar and Skyfeeder’s avatar were both destroyed and had to be remade, and so they are only at half-strength. Even with the formation supporting them, they are just barely as strong as they would be at their peak.” Autarch Titanos shook his head.

“It is enough. The true bodies will be launching attacks from afar in support, right?” Mogg laughed as well.

Although they spoke confidently, all of them remained quite cautious. They had an enormous advantage in this battle as they had chosen the battlefield and prepared formations for it, ensuring that they could unleash the absolute maximum power possible! However, they didn’t dare to truly go all-out and leave themselves with no way out. If they really did die, the cultivators would never again have a chance of reversing this defeat. Thus, if this battle really did end up poorly then the true bodies who were located in the ‘outer’ part of the formation would be able to flee at any time.

The reason why Bolin’s avatar was also located in the ‘outer’ part was to keep his continued existence a secret. Otherwise, the Sithe would

immediately find out that Bolin hadn't really died.

A total of twelve Autarch-class combatants had gathered together within the formation, and they were empowered tremendously by it. They were right to speak with confidence, but also right to be wary of this terrifying 'Grassland World' weapon the Sithe had devised.

"They are about to arrive." Autarch Bolin's true body was in constant contact with them. "Five more warps through spacetime and they'll arrive."

"Make your preparations, everyone," Autarch Titanos said. "Hide the formation's power. Don't make your moves until they enter its range."

Titanos had been alive for longer than any of the others, and he had been the most powerful before Ning's rise to power. Everyone was accustomed to him giving the orders, and he had been the one to devise the majority of the components of this formation. Ning and the others had only played a supplementary role.

Silence. The entire formation fell completely and utterly silent.

Ning and the others all stared intently, nervously awaiting the most critical battle of them all.

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"According to the information almighty Iyerre gave us, they should be arriving soon. We'll be able to escape." The nine Sithe Exalts within the Nine Cicadas Temple were all seated in the lotus position, eagerly awaiting the Grassland World's arrival. They had felt extremely restless and uneasy after being sealed away here, as all they could do was passively watch and wait for the cultivators to eventually breach the formations protecting them.

"They should arrive in just another day or two."

.....

Rumble... a dimensional rift suddenly appeared just a hundred billion kilometers away from the Nine Cicadas Temple, followed by a silvery-

white ship flying out of the rift. This was an ordinary-looking realmship, while the person commanding it was nothing more than an ordinary Hegemon.

However... the twelve Autarch-class combatants hidden within this region all knew the truth. They knew that the Grassland World was hidden within that realmship, because Autarch Bolin's true body remained trapped inside.

"They've entered the net." Autarch Titanos' eyes shone with baleful light. "Activate."

"Activate."

Ning and Titanos were in control of the Yin-Yang poles, and they simultaneously activated the formation with the other five working in concert with them. Rumble... an utterly apocalyptic amount of power instantly filled a vast region of ten trillion kilometers. The mere flow of power caused the void of space itself to be ground into countless sand-like particles, instantly disintegrating the silver realmship. As for the Sithe descendant who was commanding it, he stared in terror as he himself was disintegrated into dust.

The only thing left behind was a strange ovaloid object.

Chapter 25: Snake and Sword

This ovaloid object was the most powerful Sithe weapon... the Grassland World.

“We’ve been traped!”

“What’s going on? How could there be a trap here? We cut off all connections to the outside world and are undetectable. There’s no way the cultivators could’ve tracked us here. How could they have set up a trap in advance?!” The black-robed man, the red-robed man, and the silver-robed woman were standing atop the clouds, staring at the outside world. They were able to see past the Grassland World’s dimensions with ease.

The world outside had been transformed into a writhing realm of primordial chaos, filled with such power that even they shuddered at it.

“Did they perhaps manage to guess that we were going to come and rescue the Exalts and so set up a trap in advance?” the silver-robed woman asked, puzzled.

“They trapped a total of four temples. How could they be sure that we would come to the Nine Cicadas Temple first?” the red-robed man boomed.

“Could they have set up traps around all four temples?” the black-robed man asked in his icy voice.

“Impossible. You can see how much power the formation outside is using. The ambient power alone is enough to annihilate realmships with ease. The cultivators must have poured all their power into creating a formation of such power,” the silver-robed woman said. “There’s no way they could simultaneously maintain four or five formations of such power.”

The red-robed man shook his head. “In the end, this is their Chaosverse. They must’ve come up with some other way of tracking our whereabouts. No time to waste on wondering how they did it! Right now, our biggest problem is that we’ve already been trapped.”

"Then what should we do?" the black-robed man said with a frown.

Unlike the other Sithe Exalts, they weren't truly Iyerre's subordinates. Thus, they didn't really care too much about whether Iyerre won or not. They had only taken part because they had been required to, while the promised rewards ensured that they weren't excessively opposed to helping out! However, when they could sense that they were in mortal danger, there was absolutely no way they would throw away their own lives for the sake of this war.

Outside this Chaosverse, they could kill these Autarchs with ease. Here in this Chaosverse, these local Autarchs were terrifyingly powerful. Now that they had joined forces and used a mighty formation, the three felt even more nervous.

"We can't risk ourselves. Absolutely not. If Iyerre wants to take risks, let him do it," the black-robed man muttered.

"Let's see just how strong the grand formation is. Let the fools go," the silver-robed woman said. "We ourselves can just stand back."

"Fine." The black-robed man and the red-robed man both agreed. By their very nature, they looked down upon those three 'fools'.

"Hey, idiots! Hurry up and get over here!" the silver-robed woman shouted.

Soon, three enormous creatures emerged from beyond the clouds. The first was the giant cyclopean bear, the second was the red-eyed white-furred humanoid, while the third was the tentacled stormcloud. These Autarch-class void dwellers were extremely displeased at the contempt which these three powerful Sithe displayed towards them. They could sense it keenly, but they were weaker than the three Sithe and so there was nothing they could do.

"What do you want?" the giant cyclopean bear rumbled unhappily.

"We have business for you, of course," the silver-robed woman snapped. "The Grassland World has already been trapped by the cultivators! We don't know anything at all about the situation outside, and so we need you

to help investigate it for us.”

“Investigate?” The three Autarch-class void dwellers were filled with both rage and fear. They knew just how powerful these three Sithe were... and yet, the Sithe were too afraid to go outside and so were sending them out?

“The three of you are skilled at staying alive.” The silver-robed woman’s eyes flashed coldly. “I suggest you go immediately. Don’t force our hand.”

They had to go, whether they wanted to or not! The three Autarch-class void dwellers exchanged glances, communing in secret.

“We can go if you want,” the red-eyed, white-furred humanoid said hoarsely, “But we’ll need to keep part of our bodies within the Grassland World. We’ll only let parts of ourselves go outside! That way, we can be sure to keep ourselves alive. If you want us to completely depart from the Grassland World, we’d rather die than comply! It’d be death either way.”

“Right!” the cyclopean bear and the tentacled stormcloud both chorused.

“Haha, so you three idiots aren’t as dumb as you look?” the silver-robed woman snickered. “Don’t worry. We don’t stand to benefit from your deaths. All we want to do is to use you to investigate the outside world. We can agree to your terms... now hurry up and go! Find out what’s going on outside so we can take the appropriate counter-measures.”

The three Autarch-class void dwellers could no longer refuse, and so they immediately soared upwards through the clouds. They went through one layer of clouds after another. The clouds were normally quite resilient, but when they flew through them the clouds all parted before them. Soon, they reached the ninth and final layer of clouds.

“Be careful, everyone.” They exchanged glances, then nervously began to fly through the ninth layer as the two men and one woman below them watched intently.

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Ning and the others were using the formation to blanket and smother this entire region with their power. After trapping that ovaloid object, they

quickly saw it dramatically expand in size. Boom! Boom! Boom! It grew to be ten thousand kilometers in size... a hundred thousand kilometers... a million kilometers... ten million kilometers... a hundred million kilometers...

“Suppress it!” Autarch Titanos commanded. Ning and the others began to pour the power of the formation into doing just that.

Boom! Boundless amounts of power began to coil around the Grassland World, compressing and crushing it. As it continued to expand in size, the amount of pressure it faced continued to increase as well. By the time it reached a size of nine billion kilometers, it was unable to expand any further! Every single part of its enormous bulk was under utterly horrendous levels of pressure.

“I can’t believe a mere artifact is able to resist the power of our formation and still expand to such a great size,” Ning said. “It really is far more powerful than any of the temples we saw earlier.”

“Find its weak points. If we can’t find any, just launch an all-out attack,” Autarch Titanos sent mentally.

“Alright.”

“Let’s take a close look at the thing. Ning and the others all began to inspect the Grassland World from their various vantage points, searching for weak points. Alas, they couldn’t see anything from the outside.

A short while later, as they were still inspecting the thing, a gray part of the ovaloid object suddenly began to ripple like the clouds. An enormous creature began to emerge, quickly resolving into the giant head of the vast, foolish-looking cyclopean bear. Next to his head was a stormcloud that seemed to be filled with countless black tentacles as well as an unremarkable-looking red-eyed, white-furred humanoid.

Each just sent parts of their bodies from within the rolling screen of clouds, keeping the rest of themselves within. They stared curiously at the outside world, but they saw nothing but a mishmash of chaos. How could they tell what was going on?

“Autarch-class void dwellers!” Ning recognized them right away.

“Those were the three which attacked me previously,” Bolin’s avatar sent.

“Perfect. Everyone, attack! When they retreat, follow them inside the Grassland World,” Autarch Titanos ordered.

“Alright.”

“Attack!”

Ning and the others began to carry out the plan they had practiced a number of times in the past.

The five avatars of Titanos, Mogg, Skyfeeder, Stonerule, and Ekong within the inner formation all began to activate their respective parts of the formations. They transformed into an enormous five-headed black serpent, with each head representing one of the avatars. The main head of the black serpent was led by Autarch Titanos, who commanded the other four in attacking.

As for the ones in the outer formation, they were even more powerful but chose to be cautious and launch long-range attacks from afar.

“Go!” Autarch Mogg waved a finger from afar. Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! A series of round arcs of saber-light flew out, filled with the boundless mysteries of the Space Daobirth Essence.

Bolin’s avatar waved a finger as well, causing ten thousand beads to appear which were filled with the mysteries of the Samsara Daobirth Essence. To keep his true identity hidden, he did not use his Claw Daobirth Essence.

The other Autarchs all used their most powerful long-distance attacks as well.

“All Daos Are The Sword!” Ning willed his six Northbow swords to come flying out, filling them with the power of his mana and linking them together with the power of the other Autarchs. Ning was responsible for guiding the powers of all six Autarchs, because as an Omega Emperor he

was skilled in virtually every aspect. He understood illusions, karma, the samsara of life and death, and both space and time.

He was a bit weaker than Bolin when it came to life and death and a bit inferior than Titanos when it came to karma, but he remained incredibly skilled in all respects. Thus, he was the perfect mediator for their powers, allowing the six to join together in a flawless manner and truly transform their attacks. It was a pity that Ning's avatar was still tied down within the Annihilation Hive. Otherwise, he could've also taken responsibility over the five avatars attacking from the inner formation, allowing them to become even more powerful!

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RWX's Thoughts

Four chapters to round out the week!

Chapter 26: Unstoppable

The three Autarch-class void dwellers were in the ninth layer of clouds of the Grassland World, nervously reaching out to the outside world.

“See anything?” the cyclopean bear said, carefully scanning the primordial chaos outside.

“I don’t see a damn thing.” The tentacled stormcloud was extremely cautious as well.

“Look out!” The red-eyed, white-furred humanoid’s eyes were glowing with bloody red light as it stared intently towards a distant place, and it suddenly sent a mental warning to the others.

Riiip! An enormous black five-headed serpent suddenly slithered forward from within the mishmash of primordial chaos, its head glaring ferociously at the three as it charged towards them with an overwhelming aura.

“I’ll block it!” The red-eyed, white-furred humanoid was the closest to the serpent. It felt a sense of fear, but it still sent its two furry arms forward in an attempt to block.

Whoosh! The five heads of the black serpent suddenly attacked simultaneously while using the full power of the entire formation. This strike completely eclipsed that of any ordinary Autarch’s and was every bit the equal of Iyerre’s ultimate attack.

“Dodge!” After the black serpent crushed the red-eyed, white-furred creature, it cruised straight towards the tentacled stormcloud. The stormcloud creature was terrified but it still sent out many probing tentacles to try and defend against the impact while preparing to flee.

The black serpent slithered closer towards it, the five heads striking simultaneously once more and tearing countless tentacles apart. However, the serpent was noticeably slowed down by them.

A heartbeat later, the black serpent gave a little wriggle and then shot out once more, its speed skyrocketing to incredible heights as it flew

towards the final remaining combatant, the giant cyclopean bear. Autarch Titanos' avatar was standing in the central head, and it murmured to itself: "Where there is cause, there is effect. Karma lies in all things." The five heads of the serpent struck out in perfect harmony.

Boom! The giant cyclopean bear furiously struck out with its twin paws, managing to block the attack of the black serpent head-on. It was the physically strongest of the Autarch-class void dwellers, and so although it was at a noticeable disadvantage it wasn't instantly destroyed by the clash."

"Haha, I'm not as fragile as those other two!" the giant cyclopean bear laughed excitedly.

"Titanos, prepare to enter the Grassland World!" Ning sent mentally.

Behind the giant black serpent, a sword suddenly appeared. The sword shone with dazzling light and was filled with awesome power. The five heads of the black serpent were able to cooperate together in perfect harmony thanks to the power of karma, but this sword had transcended mere 'cooperation' and represented many different powers being merged into a perfect whole! Ning was commanding all of the long-distance attacks from the seven Autarchs in the outer formation, and he manifested them through his Sword Dao to create a terrifying divine sword that surpassed even the black serpent in power.

"CHOP!" The awesome divine sword came crashing down with such power that even the cyclopean bear felt a sense of fear. It hurriedly retreated, seeking to use its paws to defend once again.

Slaaaash! Sword-light descended, annihilating all within its path. The upper body of the giant cyclopean bear was completely destroyed by this strike.

"Ahhh!" The giant cyclopean bear was completely terrified. Thankfully it had kept its life-core within its lower left leg, and its entire lower body remained within the ninth layer of clouds. As a result, it was able to survive this strike. The three had only agreed to expose part of their giant bodies, precisely because their life-cores were what really mattered the

most.

Swoosh! The vast sword stabbed straight into the ninth layer of gray clouds. It shuddered slightly, seeking to tear through the surrounding area and rip apart the hundreds of millions of kilometers of clouds.

“Eh?” Thanks to the divine sword, Ning immediately sensed a powerful force resisting him. “Bolin was right. The ninth and outermost layer of clouds is so incredibly durable that ordinary Autarchs have no chance of destroying it at all. Even though we’re joining our power together and summoning the might of the Chaosverse itself, we’d probably only be able to cut apart a hundred thousand kilometers of it.

Autarchs were completely unable to breach the ninth layer of clouds, while a full-force blow from this divine sword was able to break through a hundred thousand kilometers of it. This was a testament to the sword’s might! The more of the clouds you wanted to destroy, the more power was needed.

“Titanos, help me keep the rift in the clouds open,” Ning sent mentally.

“Leave that to me!” Titanos sent the black serpent in to cover the rift while sending back, “I’ll leave the attack against the world of grass to you!”

The towering black serpent slithered its way into the tear within the gray clouds, its five heads slowly swiveling around its body and keeping the tear open, preventing the gray clouds from covering it back up again! It must be understood that once the tear was closed, Ning’s squad wouldn’t even be able to sense the insides of the Grassland World, much less maintain the sword and continue to fuel it with their mana. They had to keep the tear open and prevent it from closing!

The black serpent was filled with unearthly power, but it was only able to just barely maintain a thousand-kilometer sized rift.

“Sever the connection to the outside world! Quick! Sever it!” the red-robed man shouted frantically. The Grassland World truly was a complete world unto itself and as such could be completely detached from the rest of the Chaosverse, making it impossible for the Chaosverse to sense and detect it. The two men and the woman inside the Grassland World were

absolutely horrified at the power of that sword.

"There's no way to break the link!" the silver-robed woman said frantically. "That black serpent is preventing the clouds from reforming. We can't break the connection!"

"Not good! That sword is about to attack!" the black-robed man bellowed.

The giant black serpent continued to hold the gray clouds apart within the ninth layer, while the mighty sword transformed to become incomparably vast as it stabbed downwards.

Boom! The tip of the sword stabbed through the eighth layer, then the seventh layer, the sixth layer...

Clang! A violet-gold chain suddenly appeared out of nowhere. The dazzling iridescent chain flew towards the black serpent which was holding the rift in the clouds open, and it was quickly followed by yet another chain as well. The violet-gold chains launched continuous attacks against the giant black serpent. If they were able to destroy it, the clouds would close over and sever the tip of the sword from the outside world, preventing it from controlled and thus causing it to collapse on its own.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

More and more violet-gold chains appeared.

"Hm?" The hilt of the absolutely titanic sword remained within the ninth layer of clouds, while the tip of the sword continued to stab downwards.

"Break!" Ning caused a series of sharp surges of sword-ki to fly out from the hilt of the sword. Each stream of sword-ki was shaped like a fish, and a total of thirty-six swordfishes quickly flew out and took up blocking positions before the black serpent. They then began to swim together to form a whirlpool of sword-light which smashed outwards at the encroaching violet-gold chains.

These thirty-six streams of sword-ki merely represented 20% of the divine sword's power, but this defensive sword-technique in the form of a vortex of sword-light was still enough to suppress all of the attacking

chains.

By now, there were nine violet-gold chains which were furiously assaulting the whirlpool of sword-light, only to be unable to break through.

“Break! Break! Break!” The toughest layer of clouds was the ninth one. With the black serpent maintaining the tear, the other eight layers were now much easier for the gigantic sword to stab through.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The sword continued to penetrate one layer of clouds after another.

“This sword is too powerful! These native Autarchs must have come together and used something akin to a Daoguard Tower which allows them to summon the power of the Chaosverse, then had Emperor Darknorth merge all of these disparate energies together with his Omega Sword Dao. This sword is so powerful that not even all three of us working together can stop it!” The two men and the woman hidden in the center of the Grassland World began to grow a bit nervous.

“If I knew that this was going to happen, I would’ve had us rendezvous with Iyerre before coming here. Iyerre could’ve dealt with these problems,” the silver-robed woman said anxiously.

Iyerre had instructed them to go rescue the Sithe Exalts, while he himself was coming from a completely different region of the Chaosverse. As a result, their reunion was delayed.

“He was overconfident in his Grassland World,” the red-robed man said frantically. “That sword is about to pierce through the last layer of clouds!”

“We’re hidden here in the depths of the Grassland World, while the sword isn’t able to blink through the earth above us. There’s no way it’ll be able to injure us,” the black-robed man said coldly.

“But if we let them cause destruction unchecked, they might end up destroying some of the important components of the Grassland World. Once we lose this weapon, the upcoming battles will be even harder,” the red-robed man said.

“Hmph. That’s not our problem. Staying alive is what matters; losing a weapon is a minor matter. We’ve done our utmost,” the black-robed man said.

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Ning’s sword was filled with the power of seven Autarch-class combatants. It started at the eighth layer of clouds and stabbed through one layer after another. The clouds sought to form whirlpools of defensive energy to resist, causing the sword to come under tremendous pressure, but it was still able to persevere... and so, just like that, it punched all the way through the first layer of clouds.

“Bolin, return immediately!” Ning sent mentally. Bolin’s true body was hidden within the first layer of clouds.

Chapter 27: Quintessence Ignition

The towering divine sword had stabbed through all eight layers of clouds. Mana flowed through the area immediately around it, blasting away at its surroundings. This was the combined mana of Ji Ning, Autarch Titanos, Autarch Bolin, and all of the others. For their mana to be there was equivalent to them being there in person, and they could use mana to scan and scry an area. Every single drop of mana contained parts of their soul and truesoul, after all. As their mana surged through the area, it quickly covered the area where Autarch Bolin's true body was located.

"You finally made it." An unremarkable spark of energy quickly began to fly through the mana towards the titanic sword. This was the form Autarch Bolin's true body had taken once it entered the false death stage.

"Thank you, everyone." Bolin's true body only showed itself after going inside the giant sword, and he immediately laughed loudly and delighted. All this time, he had been worried that his hiding spot would be discovered, at which point he would have nowhere to run and would most assuredly die.

"Bolin, hurry up and take control of the formation! With your main body in control, we'll be able to up the power even further," Ning sent.

"Alright." Bolin's body quickly sped up through the interior of the giant sword, rising through the clouds. The divine sword was like a giant mountain which stretched from the very bottom all the way through the ninth layer of clouds, allowing Bolin to easily traverse the Grassland World and stealthily pass through the five heads of the black serpent which were keeping the rift in the clouds open! No one was the wiser as he reached the void outside the Grassland World.

"I've made it out alive." Only after exiting the Grassland World did Autarch Bolin finally let out a sigh of relief. He flew through the void and quickly reached his avatar's location in the formation, which he swapped with. The power of the entire formation instantly increased by another 20%. His avatar had already died once, after all, and so it was fairly weak.

It was by far the weakest link in the outer formation, far weaker than the true body.

“Congratulations, Bolin!”

“Bolin, remember that you owe us some fine wine for saving you from that calamity.” Stonerule, Ekong, and the others all sent happy messages to him.

Autarch Bolin smiled. “Easily done! I’ll send my avatar back and hide inside the Grassland World in my stead. Who knows, it might serve us in good stead!” He then willed his avatar to fly back into the Grassland World, following the same path he had taken in leaving. After mastering the Samsara Daobirth Essence, Autarch Bolin was superior to all other Autarchs when it came to hiding himself.

He was able to completely hide his aura and sever all karmic connections, making it impossible for even the Chaosverse to detect his existence. Even if his avatar ended up being discovered and failed its missions, its loss was a minor matter. To let his true body die while exploring would be a true shame.

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Boom! After the towering sword stabbed straight through all of the blocking clouds, it stabbed into the grasslands themselves. However, the grass was so extremely sturdy that the sword didn’t manage to pierce too deeply inside of it.

“There’s no way to dig any deeper into the grassland,” Ning sent mentally. “Gentlemen, what do you think we should do?”

“The Grassland World’s core should be located deep within its depths,” Autarch Titanos said. “Based on what I’ve seen from researching various powerful Sithe weapons, the most powerful formations will be located around the most important regions. Right now, the problem is that the sword needs to endure the restrictive power of eight layers of clouds while continuing to drill downwards. It’s only able to unleash a fraction of its full power, and I don’t think there’s any chance we’ll be able to damage the core components while doing so.”

“Right,” Ning agreed. “Stabbing through the eight layers is already consuming a bit over half of the power, while those nine chains are taking up another twenty percent. That leaves just thirty percent to deal with the grasslands below.”

“The two of you can decide on what to do,” Autarch Mogg said.

“You two understand formations better than the rest of us. You decide,” Autarch Ekong agreed. The other Autarchs were going to let Ning and Titanos take the lead, because they were the most skilled in the Dao of Formations. Titanos in particular had spent countless aeons analyzing artifice and weaponry.

“The remaining thirty percent stands no chance of punching through,” Ning agreed.

“Then let’s get rid of those nine layers of clouds first,” Autarch Titanos said. “The clouds serve as a protective eggshell around the yolk. If we can scrape away the clouds, we can deal with the interior as we please.”

“Destroy the nine layers of clouds?” Ning was intrigued.

“The core is inside the grasslands, while the nine clouds are outside. There has to be some sort of formation keeping these troublesome clouds active,” Titanos said.

“Which means if we can destroy the relevant formations, the clouds will disperse on their own,” Ning agreed.

“Right.” These two understood formations very well, and they quickly managed to come up with a method for dealing with the clouds.

“Break for me!” Ning began to twist and turn the titanic sword, sending it chopping back and forth through the clouds. Each time it did so, it created new gaping wounds within the lower eight layers of clouds! The clouds continued to cover the tears, while the sword continued to stir its way through them like a spoon.

The process continued, with the clouds reforming each time after the divine sword cut through them. This rapid healing process consumed an enormous amount of energy.

“Eh?” The mana within the divine sword was able to follow the energy ripples of the healing process, allowing formation experts Ning and Titanos to discover nine different energy wellsprings in the time needed to boil a kettle of tea.

“So they are located in nine different places at the farthest corners of the clouds?”

Not even Autarchs were able to see to the ends of the vast Grassland World, because there were spacetime formations blocking their site and hiding nine critical components of the formations powering the clouds.

“Break!”

The sword assaulted the nine points with raw force, stabbing out towards the ends of the grasslands and blasting through spacetime barriers with a rumbling sound. Although the sword only had 30% of its full power left, it still had more power than any full-force strike from one of the seven operating independently. The spacetime barriers were completely incapable of stopping it. They completely imploded and crumbled, revealing the true scene behind them.

Here, there were a series of thick clouds. All nine layers of clouds were grouped together here, masking something.

“Nine layers of clouds are protecting this place?” Ning and Titanos were delighted. Their guesses had been spot-on; otherwise, why would this place be so carefully hidden and protected?

The enormous sword first withdrew back to the outermost ninth layer of clouds, reuniting with the black serpent. Then... “Break! Break! Break!” Ning and Autarch Titanos worked in harmony, the divine sword leading the way with the black serpent following right behind it. The nine violet-gold chains sought to bar their path, but they were held back by the sword-light radiating from the divine sword.

The divine sword tore through the ninth layer of gray clouds as it made its way to the place hidden by formations previously.

“BREAK!!!” The black serpent immediately took responsibility for

keeping the ninth layer of clouds ‘open’, while the divine sword pressed the attack. It quickly broke through all eight layers of clouds, revealing countless glittering runes and complicated glyphs which were working together in an unfathomably profound manner. Energy was being sent from deep within the grasslands into the runes, which then sent the energy into the layers of clouds.

“This is a conduit formation!” Ning and Titanos were delighted.

“It’s incredibly complicated. I don’t understand it at all,” Autarch Titanos said. “Let’s break it.”

“Right.” Ning didn’t understand it either. Even if they spent ten years working on it, they probably wouldn’t manage to figure out more than a tiny bit of it. The best way to deal with a complicated formation like this was to overwhelm it with power.

Slash! The divine sword pierced through the opening which the black serpent was maintaining, carrying apocalyptic levels of force as it cut through the eight layers of clouds and then stabbed against the runes.

Boom! Countless runes and glyphs began to tremble. “Haha, illusory runes eh? Then I’ll destroy spacetime in the area. Let’s see if your formation can remain stable then!” Ning continued to violently attack, striking each blow with maximum power and causing the runes to shudder and flicker.

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Deep within the depths of the grasslands. The two men and the woman were beginning to truly panic now.

“What should we do? They found the formation linking us to the nine clouds almost right away.” The red-robed man frowned.

“Should we ignite the quintessence core?” the black-robed man said nervously.

“Ignite the quintessence core?” The silver-robed woman and the red-robed man were both stunned. The ‘quintessence core’ referred to the energy source powering the entire world. The reason why the Autarchs

had been unable to truly break into the Sithelands which had invaded their Chaosverse was precisely because the Sithelands had its own miniaturized quintessence. This quintessence core provided the Sithelands with energy, allowing the Sithe to construct those stable and deadly Daoguard Towers! However, over the aeons the energy of that miniature quintessence had been gradually depleted. By now, there was little remaining.

The reason why the Grassland World was so powerful was because it had a quintessence core of its own as well! Iyerre had asked his own teacher to give it to him, and his teacher had obliged. That was the only reason why Iyerre had been able to create this mighty weapon. Otherwise, there would've been no way to power the Grassland World. Even the mightiest of weapons needed sufficiently strong external power sources here. This was a foreign Chaosverse, after all; they were rejected here and could not draw upon the local prime essences.

"Igniting the quintessence core will consume an enormous amount of energy. If we use it all up, we'll have lost this battle," the silver-robed woman said. "We should check with Iyerre first." She immediately reached out to contact Iyerre.

A short while later a blurry pillar of light appeared which gradually resolved into the tall, barefoot, balding figure of Iyerre.

"What is it?" Iyerre asked.

"The cultivators set up a trap for us here. The Grassland World has been caught, and the nine layers of clouds are unable to stop them," the silver-robed woman said quickly. "They've even discovered the conduit formation powering the nine cloud layers. Soon, they'll have destroyed it. Once the nine clouds are destroyed, the Grassland World will be on the verge of destruction as well."

"WHAT!?" Iyerre's face was drained of all blood, and a look of shock appeared in his eyes. He was unable to remain calm any longer.

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RWX's Thoughts

First two of the week! Things are really heating up, aren't they? - RWX

Chapter 28: Formation Incarnation

The Grassland World was Iyerre's most important, the one he intended to rely on to utterly defeat the cultivators and conquer this Chaosverse. It was the main reason why he was so confident in his ultimate victory. If the Grassland World was destroyed, his chances of victory would become virtually nil. He'd all but simply have to wait for defeat.

Thus, as soon as Iyerre heard this bad news his mind became filled with many thoughts. For example, how did the cultivators manage to prepare a trap in advance? How was it that the protections of the Grassland World had been breached so easily?

The latter, he had an answer for; he suspected that the silver-robed woman and the other two weren't ready to defend it with all their strength. But the former? For now, he truly couldn't understand how the cultivators had managed to set up a trap in advance.

He didn't have any time to waste asking these extraneous questions. He immediately ordered: "Protect the Grassland World at all costs! Ignite its quintessence core right away!"

"Ignite the quintessence core?" The silver-robed woman blinked.

"Right. I'm on the way and will be there within a day. You have to hold!" Iyerre's face was as cold and hard as ice. "I have to win this war. I have to take control over this Chaosverse! If you can't hold on until I get there, don't blame me for what I'll do to you."

The three couldn't help but shudder. They knew that if Iyerre became truly infuriated with them... just thinking it chilled their hearts. If Iyerre's countless aeons of planning ended up being ruined by their cowardice, he might actually kill them!

"Understood."

"We're igniting the quintessence core right now. We'll definitely hold on!" the three hurriedly promised.

"Fine." Iyerre's eyes flashed coldly. "Things might seem dangerous, but

we still have a chance! If the cultivators have been able to beat you so easily, that means that most likely all of them are there. If possible, trap them all inside the Grassland World! Do your best to tie them down for as long as you can. Once I arrive, we'll kill them all! We stand the best chance if we can make the battlefield be inside the Grassland World."

"Understood," the silver-robed woman and the other two said hurriedly. The two sides then broke the connection, followed by Iyerre's figure vanishing from the pillar of light.

The three finally let out sighs of relief. They felt a great deal of trepidation towards Iyerre. He was normally an affable person who always had a sympathetic smile on his face, but in their homeland he was second only to the Lord of Chaos. If they truly did cause his countless aeons of hard work to go up in smoke, no one could predict how berserk he would become.

"Ignite the quintessence." The three traded a glance, then immediately activated the quintessence core.

The quintessence core was an indigo sphere that was located at the deepest depths of the Grassland World. It was filled with an utterly inconceivable amount of power. This tiny sphere had significantly more energy inside it than the entire Blazesun Domain! It had once been an incredibly vast energy source which had spun through the Infinite Void, but the Sithe Lord of Chaos had ended up harvesting it.

Not just any quintessence could be 'harvested' like this. The ones which could be harvested while remaining intact and independent were vanishingly rare.

Boom! Right as they began to ignite the quintessence, a thunderous boom rang out from the outside world, followed by a loud laugh.

"Haha, we broke one!"

Ning's voice rang out excitedly: "Come, let's break the next one!"

"Yes, let's go!" Autarch Titanos was delighted as well.

After thoroughly destroying the runes and glyphs, they wrecked the

entire formation. It was now incapable of transmitting any more energy to the ninth layer of clouds, causing its ‘healing’ speed to lessen. However, destroying just a single nexus wouldn’t be enough to cause the ninth layer to actually collapse. There were nine formations providing energy, after all.

“One of them has been destroyed already!” The faces of the silver-robed woman and the other two turned pale.

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Boom! The quintessence core ignited, causing the entire world to flare with ten thousand times more power than before! The Grassland World became filled with power, with a blurry blue light appearing everywhere within it. As for the eight remaining conduit formations, they began to pump energy out at their absolute maximum capacities! A vast torrent of energy pumped out, causing all of the formations throughout the Grassland World to skyrocket to maximum power.

Still, there was a limit to how much the conduits could pass through. The remaining amount was simply wasted. One of the nine formations generating the nine cloud layers had been destroyed, after all. Despite that, the power of the formations still rose by over 60%! If all of the formations had remained intact, the power would have instantly doubled.

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Riiip! Autarch Titanos was right in the middle of using his giant black five-headed serpent to keep a rift in the clouds open while Ning used the giant divine sword to attack yet another conduit formation.

All of a sudden, all of the clouds began to glow with blurry white light. The white light was very comfortable and carried the blessings of radiance, but it also caused the restrictive pressure generated by the clouds to skyrocket in power by 60%!

It must be understood that once one reached an extremely high level of power, improving by merely 10% to 20% was already extremely difficult. A sudden increase of 60% made it impossible for the black serpent to keep the rift open any longer.

“I can’t break through it any longer.” The divine sword had to fight back against the combined assault of the nine violet-gold chains while also enduring the restrictive pressure of eight different cloud layers. There was no way for it to keep attacking the formation, especially now that the power of the violet-gold chains had increased multifold and the clouds had grown more powerful as well.

“I can’t keep holding any longer either.” Autarch Titanos was similarly anxious. His black serpent was fighting back against the ninth and strongest cloud layer.

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Deep within a giant palace inside the Grassland World. The red-robed man and the other two were seated here, head raised and staring past the dimensional barriers to see what was happening in the world outside.

Below them were a host of other figures, including the three Autarch-class void dwellers and a number of Sithe Exalts. Iyerre had a number of ‘spare’ Exalts who hadn’t been needed to control the various temples, and they had been assigned to the Grassland World. ‘Bowenya’ was here as well.

“Should we attack?” the black-robed man said in his cold voice.

“Not just yet.” The red-robed man frowned. “We still haven’t managed to locate the true bodies of the Autarchs yet. That sword is merely composed of energy and magic treasures! Now that we’ve ignited the quintessence core, they won’t be able to cause any further damage to our formations. Let’s wait for their true bodies to descend, then trap them inside. When they are inside, we’ll be ready to wrap this battle up.”

“Agreed.” The silver-robed woman nodded.

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Ning and the others were indeed in a tough situation. The power of the nine cloud layers in the Grassland World had increased dramatically, while the violet-gold chains had become several times more powerful as well. They were finding it difficult to fight back.

“Withdraw.” The divine sword, previously capable of piercing through eight cloud layers, quickly retracted to the ninth cloud layer and then flew over to help the black serpent push at the rift. Once the rift was closed, all connection to the outside world be lost. They would no longer be able to control those treasures using mana or godsense, resulting in the collapse of the sword.

Riiiiiip. The divine sword was still mighty enough to tear the ninth layer of gray clouds open, but it was only able to tear a thousand-kilometer hole now.

“Iyerre has yet to make his move. That means he probably hasn’t arrived yet. This is a perfect opportunity which won’t come again. We need to seize this moment to destroy this weapon!” Autarch Stonerule sent mentally.

“I feel like we should have us attack in person now,” Autarch Ekong said.

“Agreed. However, we need to remain cautious. Our true bodies should just remain in the outermost layer of clouds and keep it open,” Autarch Titanos said. “We can’t go any deeper inside! Once we do, the Sithe will probably use certain tricks to keep us trapped in there. We’d be shut off from the outside world and unable to maintain our connection to the formation, at which point we would probably all be wiped out!”

Ning and the others were all wary of this possibility as well. They couldn’t afford to take a risk like that.

“Alright. Let’s make our moves.”

Just a short while later, a towering figure suddenly appeared within the void and strode towards the gray clouds. This vast figure was barefoot and almost completely naked, wearing just a fur loincloth. It had seven faces and fourteen arms! The face in front resembled that of Ning’s, while the three faces to the left side and the three faces to the right side resembled those of Autarch Titanos and the rest of the six. The towering figure’s body was covered with a blurry layer of sword-light, and the very act of walking caused it to emanate an aura of terrifying destructive force.

Ning and the others had such powerful bodies that they were strongest

in close combat. This formation-incarnation was formed by the seven of them using the power of the outside formations, but led by Ning using his Omega Sword Dao. All seven of their true bodies were located inside this formation-incarnation. As soon as it had been created, it had emanated a natural aura of infinite sword-light. Every single movement it made was filled with ineffable might.

"Being responsible for this incarnation is incredibly taxing." Ning could feel his entire body aching, as could Autarch Titanos and the others. Not only did they have to keep the giant formation in the outside world active while controlling the divine sword, they also had to physically join together in this vast formation-incarnation.

Splitting their energies three different ways like this was no easy task!

"While we keep the sword active, we'll only be able to use 70% of this formation-incarnation's power," Ning mused to himself. From a tactical standpoint, they would become deadlier if they completely abandoned the sword and instead focused on pouring all of the formation's energies into this incarnation, using 100% of its power! Still, it wasn't yet necessary for them to take such a drastic step.

Riiiiip. The formation-incarnation strode forwards towards the grayish clouds, its fourteen arms reaching out simultaneously in ripping motions. The clouds around them quickly began to roil about as a vast area of ten thousand kilometers was torn open by it.

It was quite easy for the formation-incarnation to keep this rift open, freeing up the giant black serpent and the divine sword to continue stabbing downwards.

Chapter 29: Iyerre Cometh

Deep within the palace located in the depths of the Grassland World. The silver-robed woman waved her hand, causing an image to appear next to her which displayed what was happening in the world outside. “All of you look so nervous. Fine. We’ll let you see what’s happening outside. That way, you can tell Iyerre that the three of us are being diligent in our efforts.”

The three Autarch-class void dwellers and the Sithe Exalts all stared at the images next to her. They saw a towering, seven-faced titan dressed in just a fur loincloth reach out with fourteen arms. The arms were filled with absolutely unearthly power as they tore apart the ninth layer of clouds and then kept the rift open.

Aside from the titan, there was also the giant black serpent and the gigantic sword. The black serpent was under assault by nine violet-gold chains. The serpent was clearly finding it rather hard to endure the assault, even though streaks of sword-light were assisting it in resisting the chains.

As for the giant sword, it had pierced through the eight layers of clouds and was slamming against the runes and glyphs surrounding the conduit formation.

Slash! Slash! Slash! It was clear to everyone that by the time the sword had pierced through the eight layers of clouds, it had virtually exhausted all of its power and posed very little threat to the divine glyphs and runes. They didn’t even tremble!

“We’re in no danger.”

“After we ignited the quintessence core, these cultivators are no longer a threat to us,” Boweyna and the other Exalts agreed.

“The only thing they have which could threaten us is that titan. It has to be a formation-incarnation! Given its power, I imagine the cultivator leaders are located right inside of its body,” a skinny Sithe Exalt said. “We’ve ignited the quintessence core, but it’s still able to handle the ninth

layer of clouds with ease. That means it has to be even more powerful than the sword!"

"Kiblo is right. Our greatest threat right now is that formation-incarnation," another Sithe Exalt immediately agreed.

The two men and the woman at the front of the temple let out cold chuckles. The silver-robed woman explained, "Actually, our only worry is that the formation-incarnation will NOT come inside. If it dares to do so, we'll be ready to launch a full-strength counterattack against it. We'll do everything possible to cut off its connection to the outside world! Once that happens, it'll no longer be reinforced by the might of the outside formations, at which point the incarnation, the black serpent, and the giant sword will all be dramatically weakened. Their fates will be in our hands!"

"Iyerre has already issued orders," the black-robed man continued coldly, "To seize this opportunity to trap them inside the Grassland World. Once Iyerre arrives, we'll launch our final killing strokes and annihilate them all."

"But what if they don't come inside?" a Sithe Exalt said.

"That's why we aren't attacking yet," the black-robed man said. "The more power we display, the more vigilant they will be. Let's just wait patiently. They'll begin to grow impatient once they realize they cannot destroy the Grassland World, at which point they might charge inside."

The Sithe Exalts below all murmured amongst themselves. These three clearly had completely different attitudes. The Exalts had to risk their lives and do everything in their power to fulfill Iyerre's commands, while these three simply had to 'do enough'. Still, this was indeed a good plan to lure the cultivators inside.

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The outside world. As predicted, Ji Ning, Titanos, Stonerule, and the others were all feeling extremely anxious. They had already done everything they could, save for sending in their formation-incarnation, but they remained unable to destroy the formation.

“What should we do? If we continue like this, we stand no chance of victory at all,” Autarch Ekong said anxiously. “Should we take the risk of charging inside?”

“We cannot!” Autarch Skyfeeder immediately refused. “Right now, we hold the upper hand. It is the Sithe who cannot afford to waste time. They need to force a final battle as soon as possible. We, on the other hand, shouldn’t take on unnecessary risk!”

“Actually, we are drawing closer and closer to victory,” Autarch Titanos said suddenly.

“Eh?” Ning and the others were all startled.

“What is the greatest flaw which all powerful Sithe weapons share?” Autarch Titanos asked. “Energy! This Grassland World has to be using up an absolutely enormous amount of energy. You all saw how, after we destroyed the first conduit formation, the power of the entire Grassland World suddenly skyrocketed. Even the air itself is glowing with blue light, and we can all sense how much power that light holds within it.”

Ning and the others all nodded.

“Clearly, the energies of the Grassland World are being depleted at an incredible rate. In fact, it is literally leaking power!” Autarch Titanos continued, “When we first started to cause damage and attacked the conduit formation, the Grassland World didn’t have this sort of crazy response. Why? Precisely because of how much energy it would consume. They weren’t willing to pay such a heavy price unless absolutely necessary!”

“If we can force the Grassland World to continue depleting its energies at this rate, it’ll soon break apart on its own,” Autarch Titanos said with a smile.

“Right.”

“Once its energy source is gone, even the most powerful of weapons will become nothing more than a pile of refuse.”

“Let it continue using up its power source then.” All the other Autarchs

agreed with this idea.

"Besides, Ekong," Autarch Titanos continued, "Skyfeeder, Darknorth, and the others are unwilling to take the risk of going inside because they can sense that something isn't quite right. When we first started to attack the world of grass, they initially sent out those three Autarch-class void dwellers to fight back against us. After those three fled, not a single Sithe has come out to stand in our way."

"Do you really think such a vast world of grass wouldn't have someone in control of it? Even ordinary temples have several Sithe Exalts and powerful golems protecting them. Does this world of grass really just have a few chains guarding it?" Autarch Titanos said.

"Yes, I have the feeling that something is off," Ning said. "There's no way such a powerful weapon would only be defended by a few chains."

Autarch Titanos nodded. "That's why I have the feeling that they are intentionally holding back to lure us inside. Once our true bodies go through the clouds, they'll be ready to show their daggers. This would instantly become the final battle of this war... but the final battle has to be on a battlefield of our choosing, not this world of grass!"

"Agreed." They would rather give up this opportunity than take on such enormous risk. So long as they remained alive, they were still 'winning' and would have a chance to gain a final victory in the future.

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Ning and the others were of the same mind on this, and so they quickly calmed down. They continued to use the black serpent and the divine sword to assault the conduit formation, forcing the Grassland World to pay a heavy price in energy and keep the quintessence core ignited.

The Sithe continued to wait from their hiding place deep beneath the grass, waiting impatiently for the formation-incarnation to come inside... but the Autarchs simply refused to do so!

Time flowed on quickly. A full day went past in the blink of an eye.

The ignited quintessence core was consuming energy thousands of times

more quickly than it normally would. This single day had cost it the equivalent of dozens of years of energy! This was an absolutely shocking rate of energy consumption, which was why the three had been so hesitant to ignite the quintessence. This single day had caused the quintessence core to shrink by one full size.

Whoosh! A tall, barefoot man was striding through spacetime rifts, frantically advancing through the void. “I’m almost there.” Iyerre was both anxious and furious. His calculations indicated that the ignited quintessence core could only last for around three days. Normally, it would have been able to last for over a century! Now, however, it had lost nearly 40% of its power. How could he not be impatient?

“Damnit. They still haven’t gone inside!” He had paid such a heavy price, but with nothing to show for it! If the cultivator leaders had barged into the Grassland World, he would’ve ordered his subordinates to launch the final battle in order to keep them trapped there at all costs. By the time Iyerre himself reached the Grassland World, he would kill them all! Iyerre was absolutely certain of being able to kill them when the battlefield was within the Grassland World itself.

And yet... a full day had gone past. The cultivators had to know that they weren’t able to break the formation apart, but they refused to go inside!

Slash! After yet another warp through spacetime, he finally arrived at the scene of the battle. This entire region was covered by an enormous formation, but Iyerre appeared directly within its borders. As he did so, Ning and the others instantly sensed Iyerre’s appearance.

“It is Iyerre!” Ning and the others were all shocked.

“He’s simply incredible. Our formation should’ve suppressed spacetime, but he was able to tear through our suppression and warp through spacetime. The suppression was useless!”

“No wonder our seal against the Sithelands was completely useless.” Ning and the others were all stunned by Iyerre’s might. Omega Autarchs truly did surpass their insights by far too much.

“Hmph.” Iyerre stepped forward, tearing through spacetime once more

and appearing in the grayish clouds which served as the outermost layer of the Grassland World. He then easily passed through the clouds to go inside.

Moments later, a wave of power swept across the entire Grassland World, including Autarch Bolin's avatar which was hiding within via his 'false death' state.

"Neither dead nor alive? Is that Autarch Bolin? So my foolish subordinates weren't able to kill you after all. It must have been you who revealed the Grassland World's location." As Iyerre's voice rang out, he himself appeared on the first layer of clouds. He immediately reached out towards a patch of empty space, forcing it to suddenly reveal the avatar of Bolin which immediately began to flee.

Boom! The blue light of the Grassland World covered Iyerre, illuminating his body. Iyerre simply waved his hand, commanding the blue light to shoot out. When Ning and the other Autarchs fought, they could command the power of the Dao... and here in the Grassland World, Iyerre could command the power of that miniature quintessence. Although it couldn't compare to the actual Quintessence of the Chaosverse in power, it was still enough to dramatically strengthen Iyerre.

Iyerre swung out a palm which surpassed both spacetime and the cycle of life and death. Bolin's avatar had nowhere to run and nowhere to hide, and it was instantly splattered into nothingness by that giant palm.

If Bolin had been here in person, he might've been able to endure for two or three strikes before falling. This avatar, however, was newly made and very weak. In the Grassland World, it was unable to withstand even a single blow from the empowered Iyerre.

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RWX's Thoughts

This is the end of book 44. Book 45, the final book, is coming soon!

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